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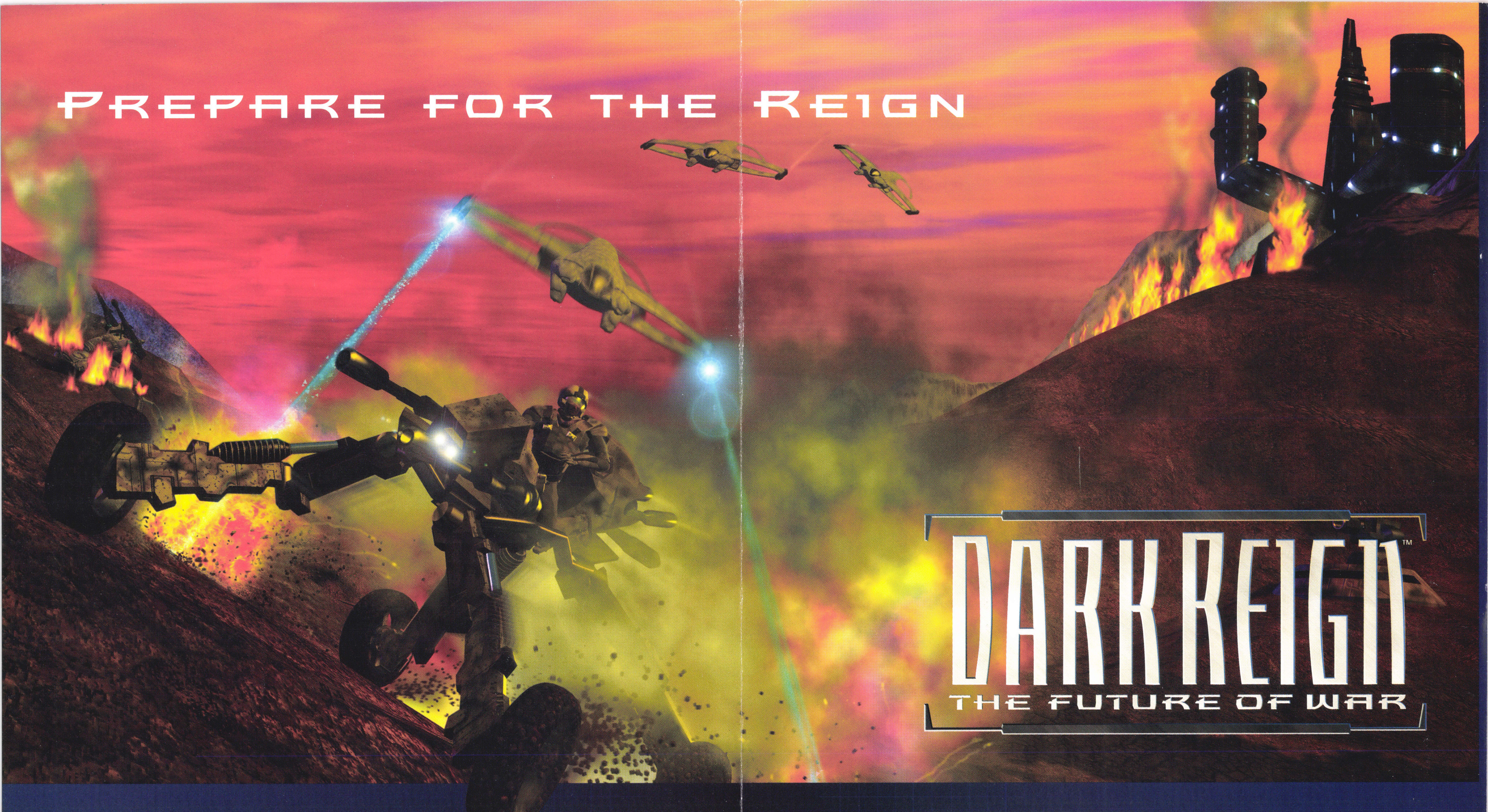
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5:00
Trey's path
New Path 8
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Units on Path
Construction Crew
Radar Unavailable
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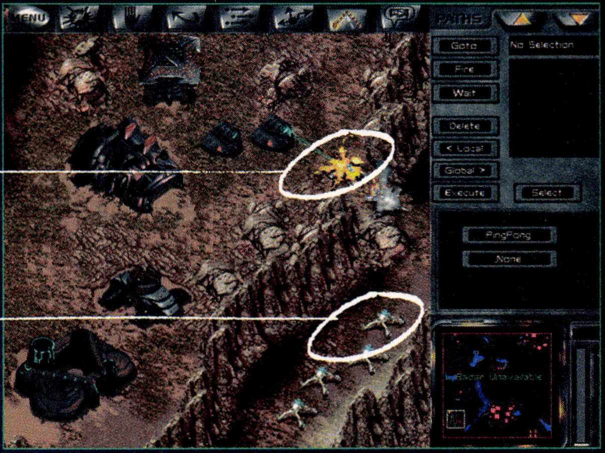
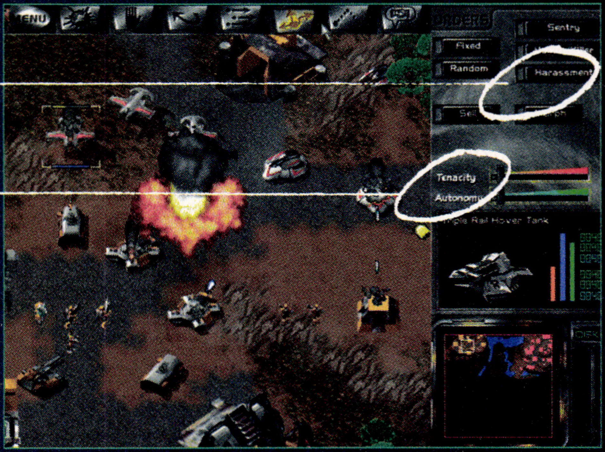

MENU
PATHS
Goto
Fire
Wait
Delete
< Local
Global >
Execute
Select
No Selection
PingPong
None
Radar Unavailable

Launch underground ambush

Hide spider bikes in ravine

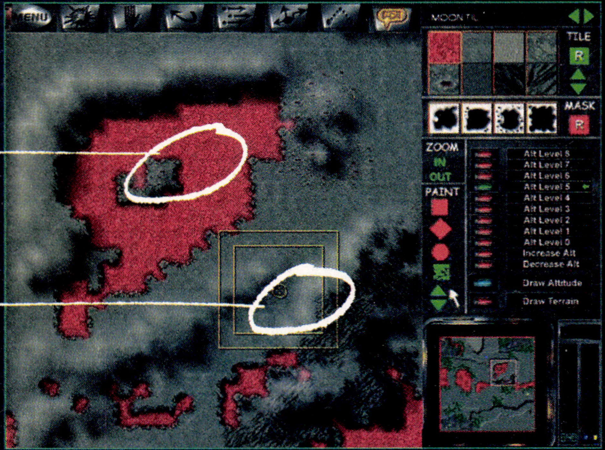
2. LAUNCH ADVANCED ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE


MENU
ORDERS
Sentry
Fixed
Random
Harassment
Tenacity
Autonomy
Triple Rail Hover Tank

Harass enemy troops

Order units to retreat when hit

3. DEVELOP UNRIVALED MAPS AND MISSIONS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TILE
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MASK
R
ZOOM
IN
OUT
PAINT
Alt Level 8
Alt Level 7
Alt Level 6
Alt Level 5
Alt Level 4
Alt Level 3
Alt Level 2
Alt Level 1
Alt Level 0
Increase Alt
Decrease Alt
Draw Altitude
Draw Terrain

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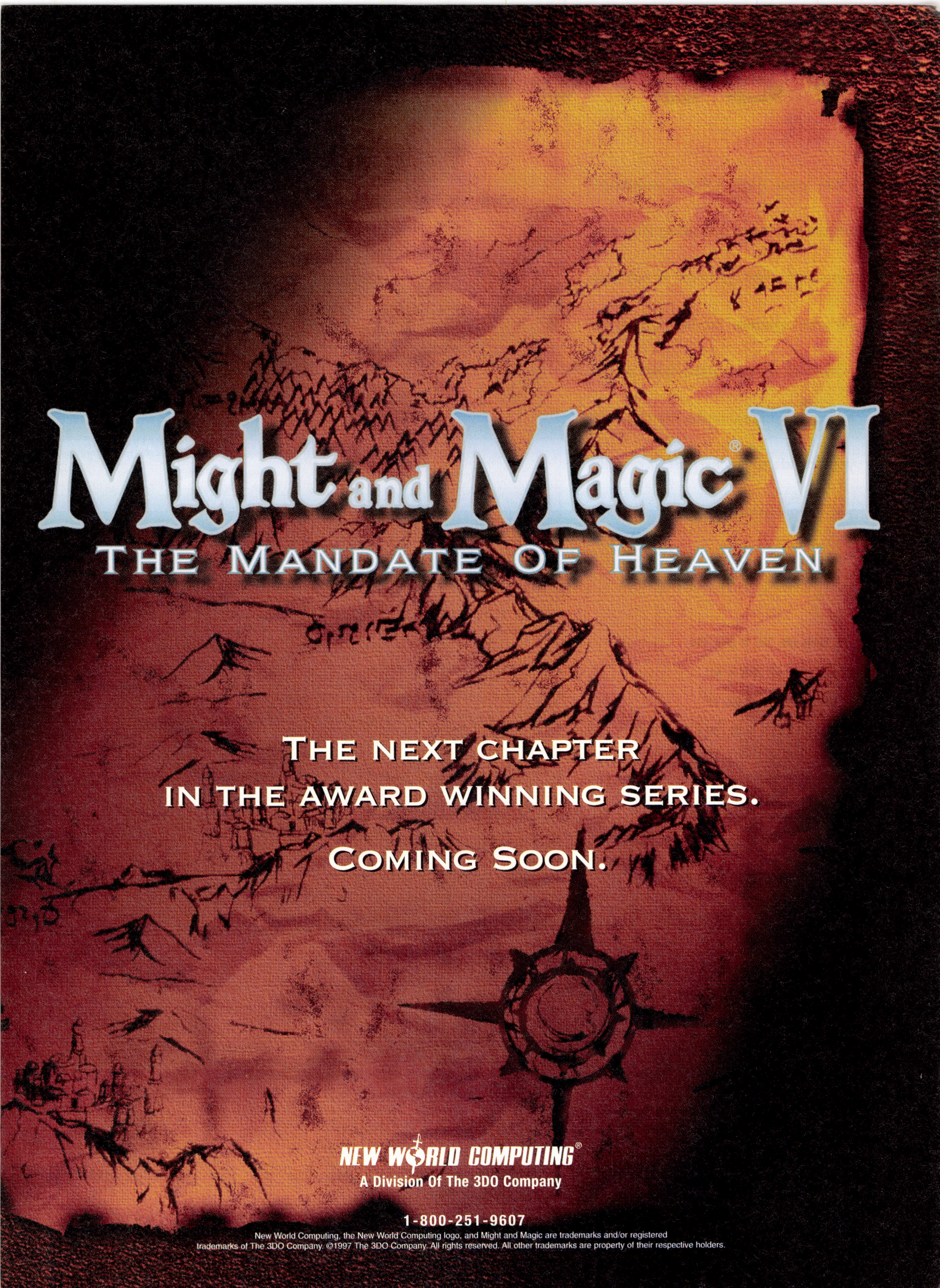

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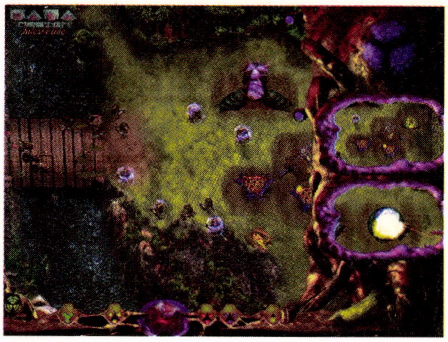
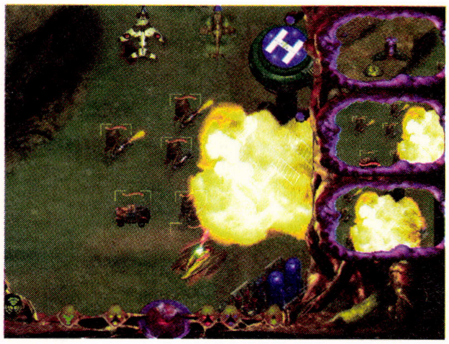
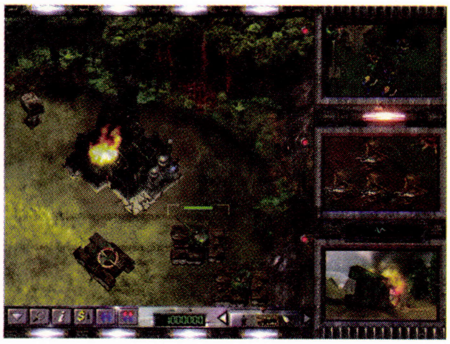


You can play either side in this intergalactic strategy game. Instantly morph into a weapon or battle tank—even a human being.



When playing the alien side, you'll experience a unique interface with different rules and capabilities. You'll employ never-before-seen tactics and strategies to foil your human counterparts.



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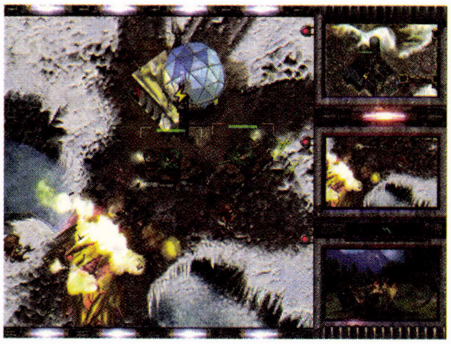

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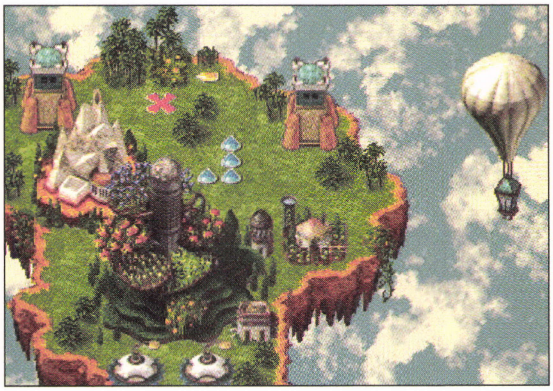

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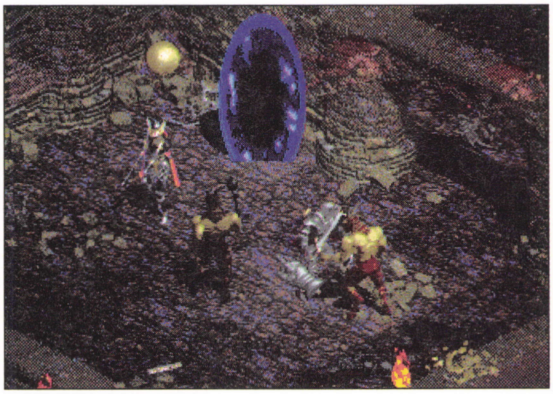

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Classic ★★★★★
Excellent ★★★★☆
Good ★★★☆☆
Fair ★★☆☆☆
Why? ★☆☆☆☆

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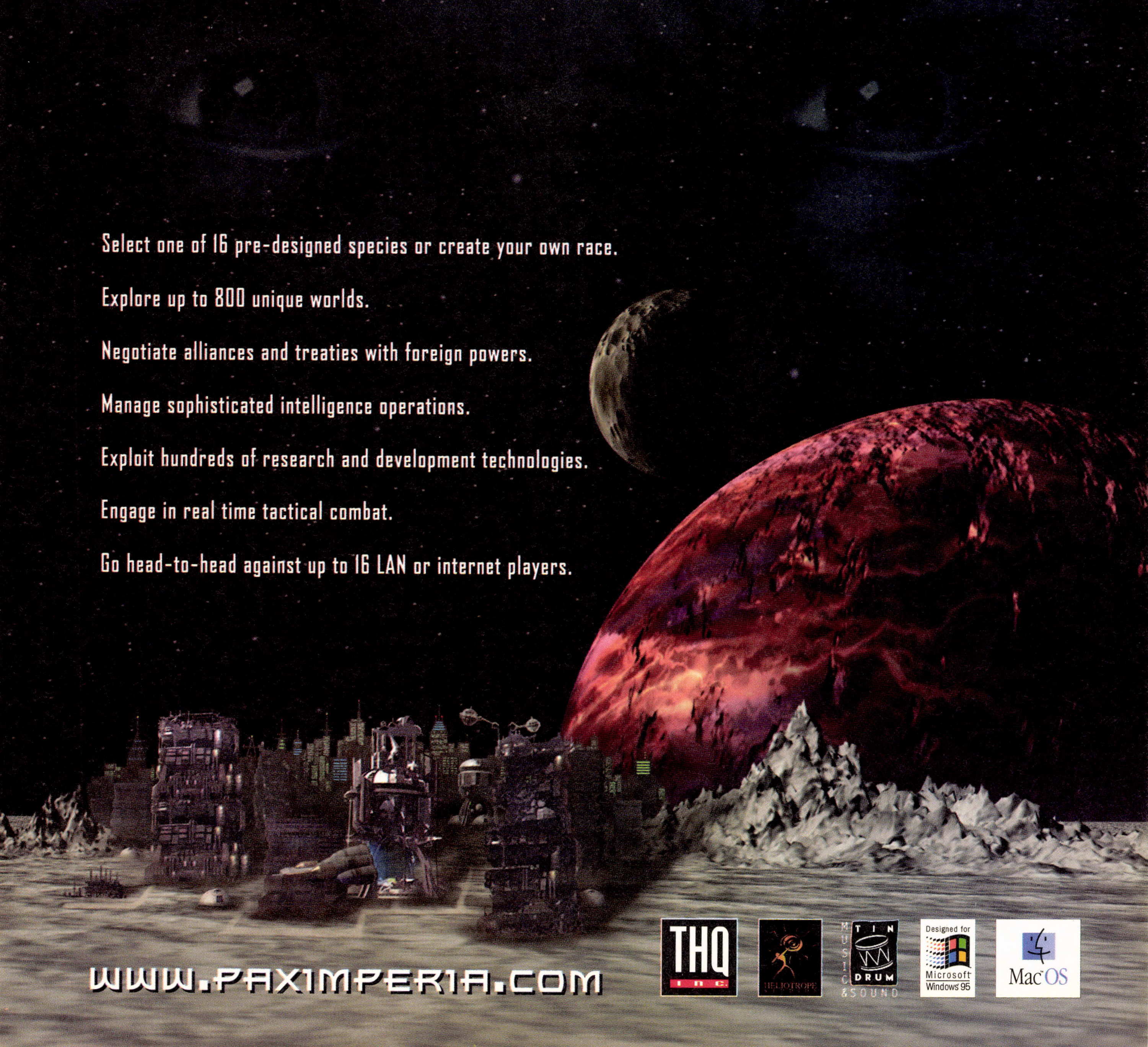

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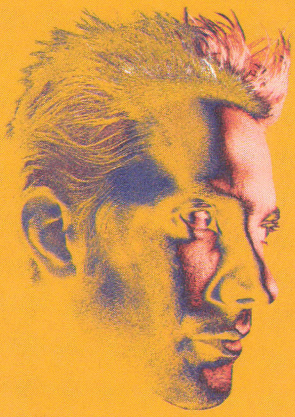

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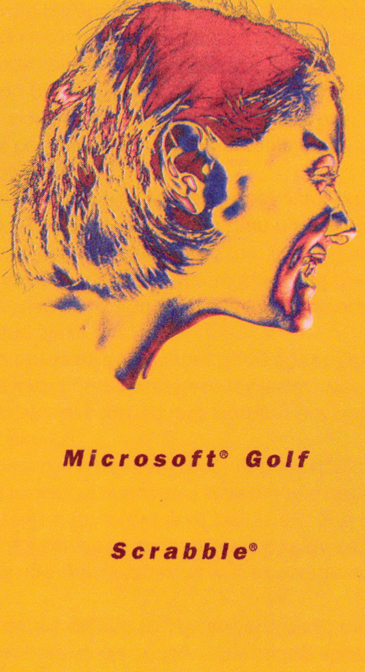

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The state of the magazine

There is a tendency to view the past with a certain amount of revisionist romanticism, a general longing for a return to the "good old days," a time that, for most of us, exists only when we have one of those philosophical moments. (Can't sleep? Get philosophical…) Whether you wish "they" would make movies like they did in the '40s, games like they did in the '80s, or computer game magazines like they did in the early '90s, you tend to selectively remember only the best bits of the pasts, kind of like watching re-runs of your favorite TV show and fast-forwarding through the commercials. (For movie fans, how about fast-forwarding through Marlon Brando's speeches at the end of *Apocalypse Now*?)

Last month we had our former editor Steve Wartofsky reminiscing about the past, and a few weeks later we received a few letters expressing disappointment over the state of the magazine:

From Gregory Rathbun: "A few years ago, your magazine was awesome, with scads of info on wargames and RPGs. Now all I find is a bunch of lame reviews and strategy guides."

From Paul A. Rivas: "I've been a subscriber for a couple of years now, and I realize that my specific interest in military history and historical wargames puts me in a rather small minority of your readers. I may be wrong, but over the past year I seem to have detected a shift toward the '*AD&D*' and science fiction genres."

From Mike "ekiM" Kent: "Your magazine has turned into nothing but fluff. Half of it is useless First Looks that do nothing to avoid game purchase roulette. I want serious in-depth reviews of strategy games. I do not want to hear anything about "story" games like *Myst*. I do not care about Indy car racing sims."

We have every previous issue of the magazine, and I can state unequivocally that the magazine has never been better. The reviews feature better writing, and the opinions expressed therein are stronger and more forceful, something that is validated by the volume of letters we receive from people who agree and, more often than not, disagree with them. We don't expect you to agree with every review – all we can hope to do is make our case convincingly, and if you disagree, let us know.

We don't do as many long previews because readers have complained that magazines "hype" products too much. While you won't find many "this will be the best game of the year" statements in our previews, we do present longer articles on the games we feel you're most interested in, and if the games look special, we'll let you know.

Finally, we haven't stopped covering wargames. Companies stopped producing them. We've always covered a lot of fantasy role-playing games, but the number has declined over the years (some old issues only had reviews and previews of wargames and CRPGs). If we cover more action games today, it's due to the fact that there are more action games to cover.

We do cover "story" games like *Myst* because a lot of you out there really like those types of games (especially when you consider the amount of mail we receive looking for adventure tips from Unca). And despite Steve Wartofsky's leaving, we will continue to cover any and all simulations, on land, sea or air, that come our way.

The point I'm trying to make is that we take your feedback seriously, even if it's critical of the magazine (as in the case of the above letters), or if it uses the term "bubble ass." (Angry Angler, my man, we owe you a drink.) We're not above criticism – that would be the ultimate hypocrisy for a magazine that reviews products. So this issue, we've looked over your feedback and implemented a couple of minor changes.

First off, the reviews will be longer, and there will be fewer of them. By fewer, we mean you may not see a review of a product like *Catfight*, but you will get a longer review of games like *Diablo* or *Civilization II*. We'll still be covering every product that passes through our doors; however, some of them will be exclusively available on our web site, *Computer Games Online*, www.cdmag.com. The great advantage of the web is its nearly unlimited content and ability to serve as an archive for all of our articles. Our redesigned site allows us to generate more articles than we'd ever be able to include in the magazine.

Also, because so many of you asked for them, we've brought back game requirements, with one caveat – you're not allowed to hold us to what the companies say is the minimum machine requirement. A general rule of thumb to follow to add two processor speeds and double the RAM requirements of whatever the company says is kosher, *i.e.*, if our article says that a game requires a 90MHz Pentium with 8MB of RAM, it really wants a 133MHz Pentium with 16MB.

We'll try to keep future changes to a minimum, but if you see anything you do or don't like, please let us know. We're always open to new ideas, and can implement changes without consulting our stockholders (one of the big benefits of being an independent). Speak up now before we implement the new "scratch and sniff" reviews. Operators are standing by at editor@cdmag.com.

–Steve Bauman, Managing Editor

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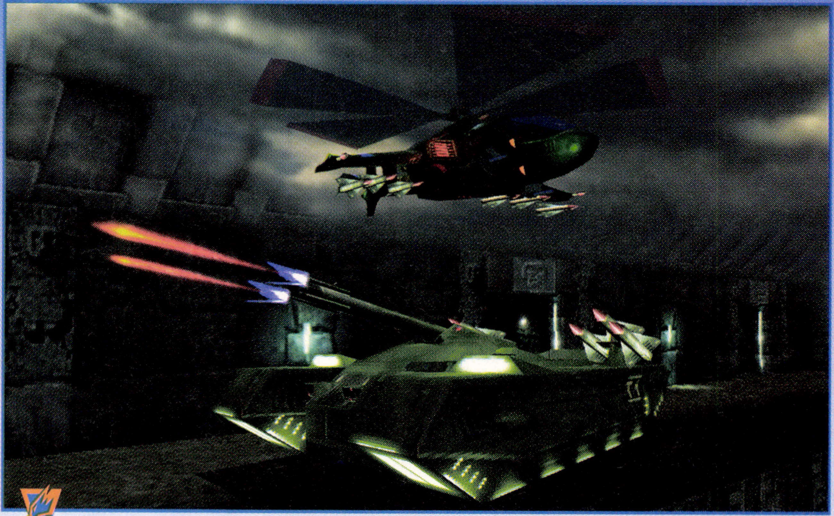

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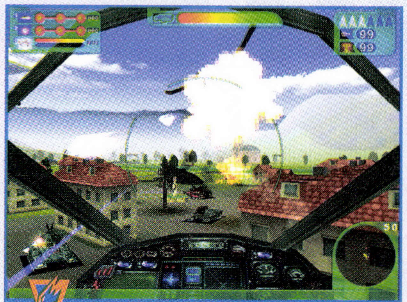
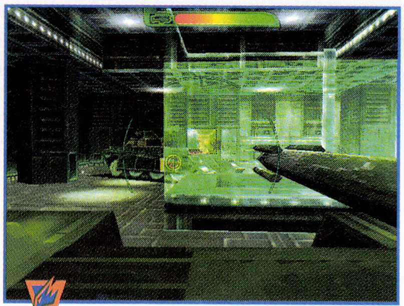


Fight many short intense missions that will keep your adrenaline pumping for hours on end!



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Matt Broughton

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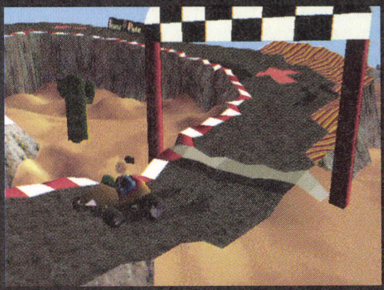

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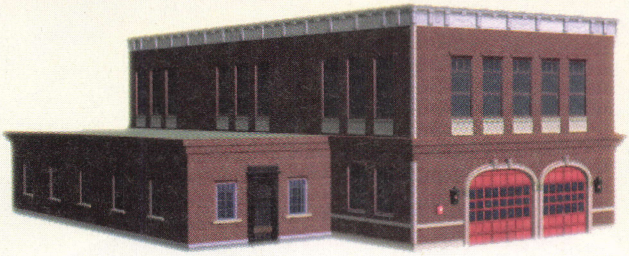
A SimDecade of SimGaming



For their 10th anniversary, Maxis has quite the gaming arsenal

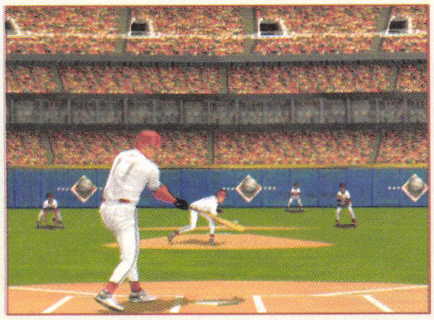
IT'S BEEN A LONG, STRANGE TRIP FOR MAXIS since the days when everyone turned down *SimCity* and they became a company so they could publish it. That was ten years ago. Today, after a couple of years of producing a couple of games and a bunch of educational products, they're back with a new version of their big franchise, and a number of other titles. Surprisingly, they're now producing action games with violent content, from the armed cars in *Streets of SimCity* to the *Diablo*-esque action of *Gateway*.

By the time you're reading this, Maxis should have released two new sports games, *Kick Off 97* (DOS, Windows 95) and *Tony La Russa Baseball 4* (Windows 95), a soccer and baseball game respectively. Both will try to establish them as a viable sports-game publisher, something that *SimGolf* was unable to do. The rest of the lineup is as follows:

SimCity 3000

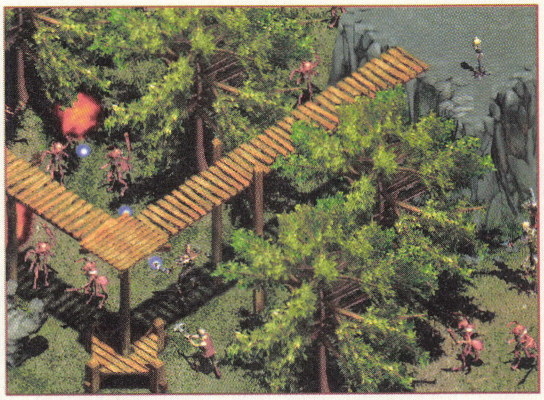
Obviously, their biggest release in 1997 is *SimCity 3000*. *SimCity*, in various incarnations (from *Classic* to *2000* on various platforms) has sold a mind-numbing five million units since it appeared in 1989 (*SimCity 2000* sold 500,000 units in 1996 alone!). The current plan is to release an all-new version of the game every two years, with add-on packs filling out the in-between years.

SimCity 3000 features new technology and a myriad of gameplay improvements to make it a true next-generation product. First off, the game now allows you to view your city from any angle, as they've gone to true 3D graphics (and will support Direct3D). You'll be able to view everything from high above the city or zoom down to city level to find out exactly what's going on with your SimCitizens. A dynamic rendering system has been developed to allow the game to scale to different machine speeds (it adjusts detail and polygon count on all objects), and the buildings are designed to allow numerous variations, making for a more dynamic city environment.



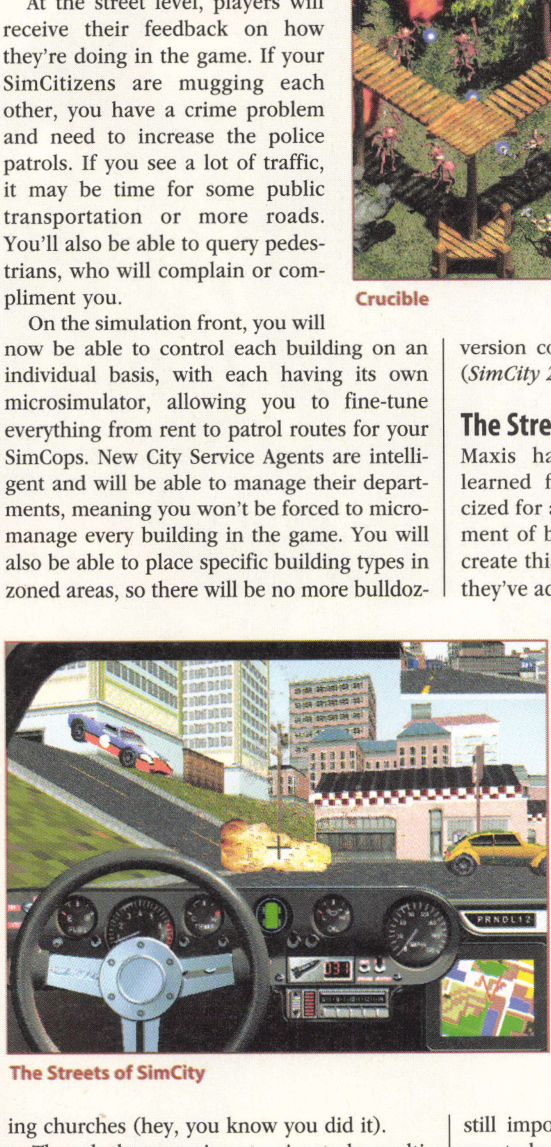
Tony La Russa Baseball 4

At the street level, players will receive their feedback on how they're doing in the game. If your SimCitizens are mugging each other, you have a crime problem and need to increase the police patrols. If you see a lot of traffic, it may be time for some public transportation or more roads. You'll also be able to query pedestrians, who will complain or compliment you.



Crucible

On the simulation front, you will now be able to control each building on an individual basis, with each having its own microsimulator, allowing you to fine-tune everything from rent to patrol routes for your SimCops. New City Service Agents are intelligent and will be able to manage their departments, meaning you won't be forced to micromanage every building in the game. You will also be able to place specific building types in zoned areas, so there will be no more bulldozing churches (hey, you know you did it).



The Streets of SimCity

Though the game is not going to be multiplayer, Maxis has designed it to accept modules and plug-ins that will be available online. You may be able to download new scenarios or additional buildings, some for free and some may cost money (or maybe you'll "subscribe" to the game for a year).

Perhaps indicative of the state of Macintosh gaming, *SimCity 3000* will appear first on the PC (Windows 95) in October, with the MacOS version coming out in the first half of 1998 (*SimCity 2000* was released first on the Mac).

The Streets of SimCity

Maxis has applied some of the lessons learned from *SimCopter*, which was criticized for a lack of gameplay and the requirement of building towns in *SimCity 2000*, to create this, their first driving game. First off, they've added a lot more variety to the gameplay, including four fixed scenarios dubbed "television shows," each of which includes eight different "episodes."

You'll be able to choose between five different cars, including an armed bread truck (!?!) and battle drivers with oil slicks, missile launchers, smoke screens, machine guns and mines. In typical fashion, you earn money for winning races and can upgrade your car as you go along. Network play is supported for up to eight players.

To address the problem of limited cities, Maxis has added an editor that doesn't require *SimCity 2000* (you can, of course, still import cities from that game), allowing you to build racetracks or cityscapes.

LunaSim

After *SimCity*, a space colony simulator is probably the one product that Maxis fans have desired the most. Aware of the legacy of *Outpost*, *LunaSim* (working title) is a lunar colony simulator that's more interested in entertainment value than hard science (one of the many failings of *Outpost* was its lack of balance in this area). Details are a bit sketchy at this point, but you'll have to manage limited resources and eventually build up your base to the point of not requiring the support of the powers back home. Combat will be real-time.

Frenzy

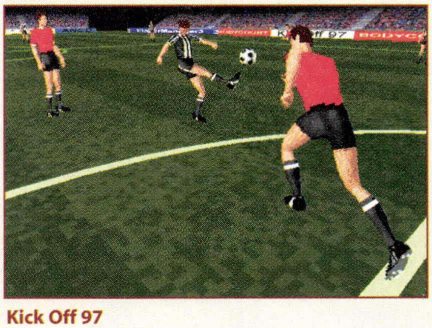
It's time to pay our respects to the most underrated 3D game of all-time, Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet.* Thats game's morphing terrain is used as a launching point for *Frenzy* (another working title), a 3D action game where players are a group of scientists terraforming a planet. You're suddenly attacked by an alien race, and it's up to you to convert your terraforming tools into weapons in order to fend off the invading horde. Like *Magic Carpet*, the 3D terrain will constantly shift and change, with players able to generate volcanoes or collapse caves in order to defeat the bad guys.

Crucible

This multiplayer fantasy action game is from the developer of *Marble Drop*. You control one of eight different hero types, each with unique powers, battling 24 different monsters in eight worlds, with ten levels per world. In the multiplayer game, players may control the monsters or the heroes.

Clay Warfare

A real-time strategy game, *Clay Warfare* (again, a working title) has clay creatures doing battle for control of various territories. What makes it unique is that units don't destroy the opposition; instead, the stronger unit merges with the weaker one to form entirely new units that combine aspects of both. The winning player will have morphed with all of the units on the other side.



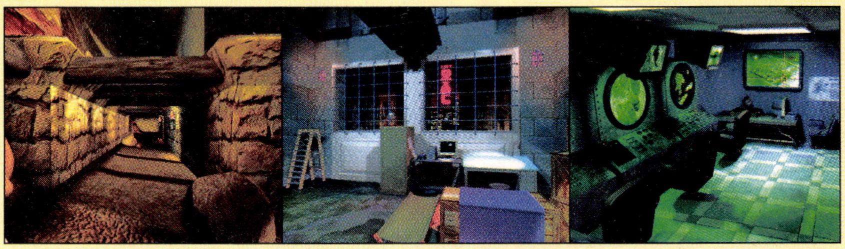
Kick Off 97

SimSafari

Hang out in the African Savanna with the latest *Sim* product. Design and manage your own African wildlife refuge – complete with wild animals and exotic plants – while trying to coexist with a neighboring village and enticing tourists to visit.

The final word

All of these titles are expected by the end of 1997, although at least a few of them might slip into early 1998. With an arsenal of games covering multiple genres, this is *Maxis'* most promising lineup in years. *–Steve Bauman*



Overseeing the Overseer

Tex Murphy gets a new directive – DVD or die

SCARY, BUT TRUE – BY THE END OF THIS year, we may expect to see some of the first PC systems ship with on-board DVD-ROM. Because DVD-ROM drives can read CD-ROMs, there is at least no threat that your immense libraries will be made obsolete (and the 5 ¼ floppy seems like only yesterday). DVD, which stands for Digital Video Disc, Digital Versatile Disc, or nothing, depending on whom you ask, is essentially a bigger, faster CD that can hold video as well as audio and computer data. One of the first major titles to have its initial launch on a DVD-only platform will be Access Software's *Tex Murphy 3: Overseer*. At some point, a CD-ROM release will follow.

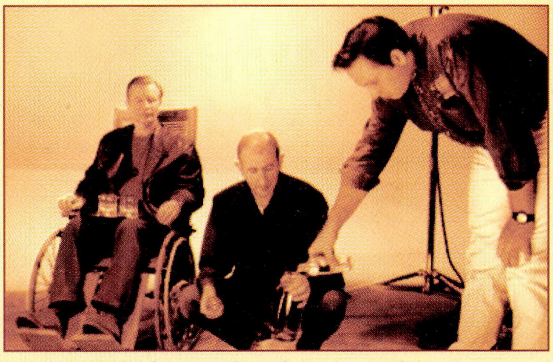
Besides bundle-related dollar signs in the eyes of the salespeople, what does a DVD release mean to the production team? Versatility of sound production is a major asset. DVD's A3C Dolby Surround Sound allows a multi-channel surround that was not possible before because of bandwidth restrictions. The quality of ambient sound from multiple directions and the use of extremely low frequencies will boost mood enhancement (with the right set of speakers). DVD will also provide means to increase the frame rate to 30 frames-per-second, to eliminate most of the compression, to stay in Hi-color and True Color and to achieve higher-than-TV resolution.

Overseer is somewhat of a prequel to *The Pandora Directive* It's the year 2043. Tex Murphy (Chris Jones) is still entranced by the lovely Chelsee Bando (Suzanne Barnes). He has just wrapped up his latest case (*Pandora*) and is recounting to Chelsee the details of his *first* case, which surrounds his initial association with his ex-wife, Sylvia. Tex becomes involved in the investigation of her father's apparent suicide, which eventually leads him to the inscrutable J. St. Gideon (Michael York), a conundrum unto himself. The player (and Chelsee) explore the development of the weathered PI from a greenhorn optimist to a hard core, commitment-wary cynic.

In a whirlwind several week film shoot, Director Adrian Carr took the cast of seventeen through the script in record time. From *Under a Killing Moon* to *Pandora* to *Overseer* the duration of shooting became increasingly consolidated. Chris Jones believes that the shorter schedule will result in more consistent characterizations than ever before, and that the advanced technology will attract the multitudes.

After much feedback about *Pandora*'s being too long, or too laborious (remember the Roswell segment?), Jones is making sure this time around that gameplay will stay at a level that maintains the pace throughout, and that varying difficulty levels will provide a widespread appeal.

While Chris Jones provides a great deal of the body of *Overseer*, director Adrian Carr provides the heart. Carr, an Australian editor and film director, gently guides his actors while his impeccable sense of the visual allows him to cut an entire scene in his head as he progresses. His love of the craft stems primarily from working with actors whose craft he deeply understands and appreciates. Finally, the soul of the product clearly belongs to writer Aaron Conners. According to all involved, Conners has provided a story and script that needed little revision, with dialogue that the actors found amazingly natural. Carr and Conners hope to continue their affiliation, either in the *next* Tex Murphy game (yes, there will be one) or in future film endeavors. It just goes to show that FMV is still kickin'. *–Cindy Yans*



Is that a martini for Carr after a long day on the set?

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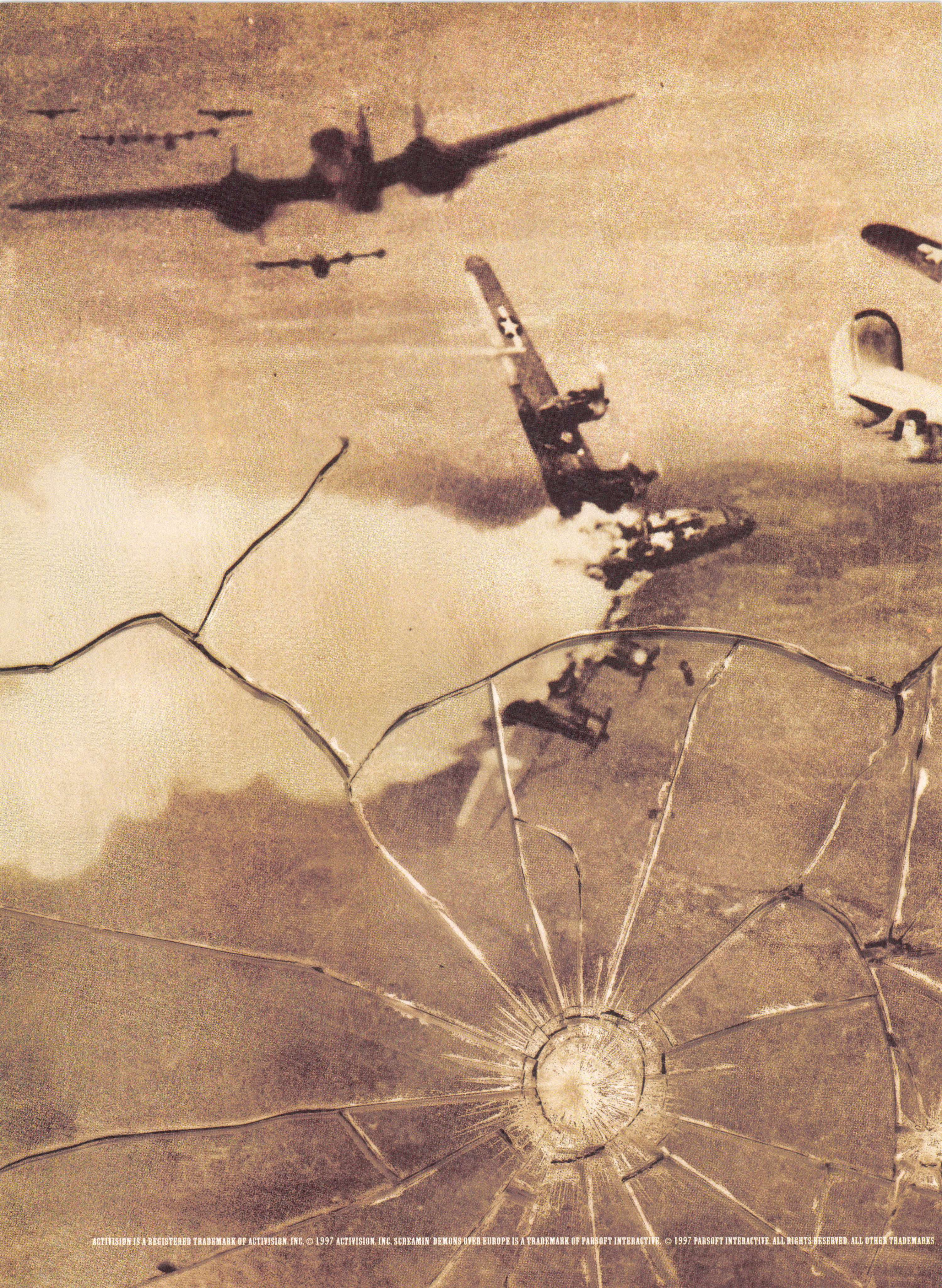

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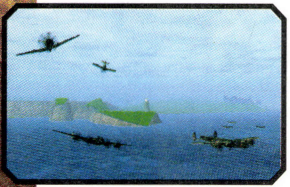
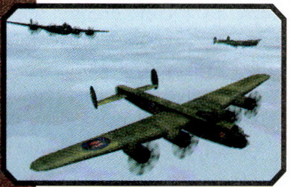
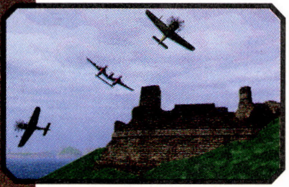


Live environments feature concussion effects, terrain deformation, and integrated road and rail systems which offer unparalleled interactions like tunnel fly-throughs.



Nine WWII aircraft duplicate plane physics for true-to-life dogfighting maneuvers such as snap rolls, tail slides, Immelmanns, barrel rolls and spin outs.



Customizable planes, an objective-based mission editor, multiplayer combat and native 3-D card support with up to 30 frames per second.

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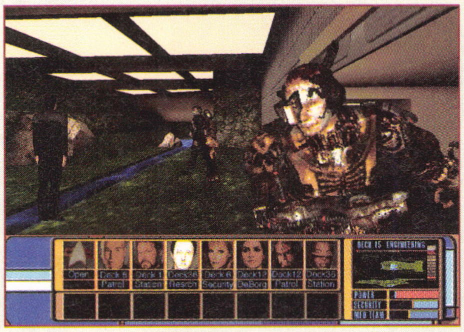
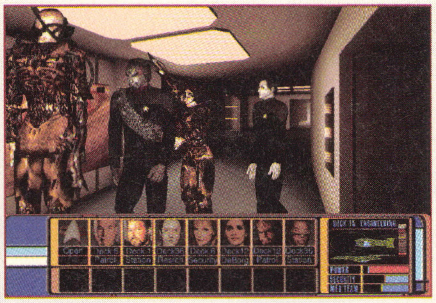
Star Trek: First Contact

MicroProse wants to assimilate you into the collective

FIRST LOOK THE VENERABLE *Star Trek* license meets cutting-edge 3D technology in *Star Trek: First Contact*. Based on the movie of the same name, *First Contact* is a 3D action/adventure utilizing the Epic MegaGames' *Unreal* 3D engine. The beauty of that engine will allow MicroProse to recreate the Enterprise-E as the player battles the evil Borg for control over the ship's crew and systems.

You will be able to jump to and from multiple *Next Generation* crew members, including Jean-Luc Picard, Will Riker and Data, in single-player mode. Over a network, you'll play as a team to defeat the Borg, as deathmatches between Enterprise crew members is frowned upon by Paramount (who owns the license). In keeping with the presence of the Borg in the game, players will be forced to alter their tactics over the course of the game in order to defeat the constantly evolving Borg.


It's a Borg! Run for the hills


An early version of Worf and Data wandering the halls, avoiding the Borg

Regular readers are well aware of the beautiful *Unreal* engine (16-bit color, incredibly complex environments, amazing speed) but the technology of the characters is equally impressive. It uses voxel technology with texture-mapping developed by AnimaTek to produce better looking and more realistic characters.

Resistance to the game will be futile when it's released in the first half of 1998. *–Steve Bauman*

Star Trek: First Contact • *MicroProse* • *Windows 95*

BRIEFS: Errata – The **Chess Wars** review [*CGS+* 79] mistakenly stated that the ability to play against past Masters was not included in the game; while not built into the game's front-end, it can be done – see the README file for instructions… **LucasArts enters the Zone** – LucasArts has selected Microsoft's **Internet Gaming Zone** to be the home of Internet play for their upcoming lineup of games, including ***Outlaws, X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter, Star Wars Rebellion*** and ***Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II***. LucasArts has created a multiplayer launching area called Rebel HQ (**www.rebelhq.com**), which links to the LucasArts area on the Zone. Speaking of *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*, its developer, **Totally Games**, has

MechWarrior III

It's now MicroProse's turn to bring FASA's universe to life

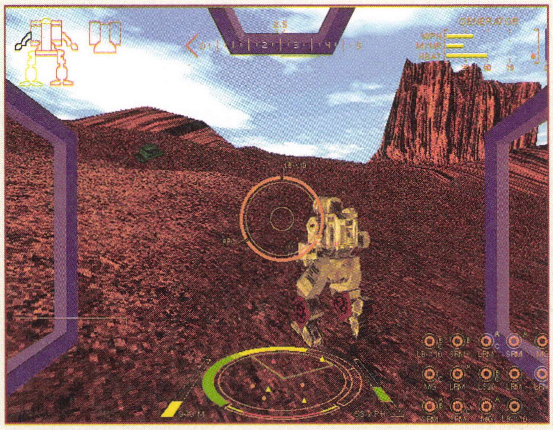
FIRST LOOK IF ACTIVISION'S *MechWarrior 2* is a tough act to follow, then FASA went to the right people to create the next battling 'bot game – themselves. Created by FASA Interactive and published by MicroProse, *MechWarrior III* will be the first home PC game to incorporate the MUNGA technology that FASA uses in their Virtual World BattleTech Tesla System cockpits.

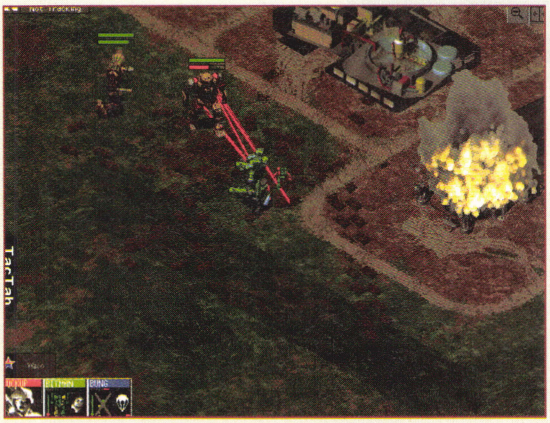
Players will battle over a series of environments with the backdrop of a FASA-created story. You'll be able to customize their 'Mechs in the Mech Lab. You can decorate your 'bot with different parts and plaster on unique decals and symbols drawn from the *BattleTech* universe. Or you can create your own, which should prove popular for multiplayer gamers.

In other FASA news, they're also hard at work on a real-time strategy game set in the *BattleTech* universe called *MechCommander*. In this game, you'll be able to direct up to 12 'Mech's as you battle enemy 'Mechs, Elementals and Armored Vehicles. The campaign puts the player in the role of a MechCommander who's trying to take the planet Port Arthur from the Smoke Jaguar Clan.

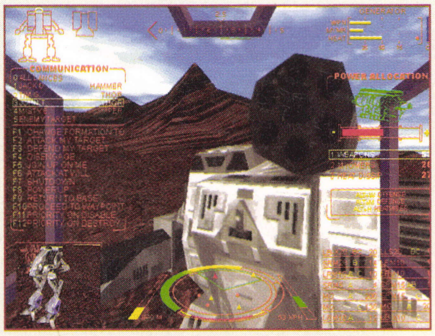
Finally, they're also working on an action game called *Shadowrun*, based on the role-playing universe. It will be an isometric action game not unlike *Diablo*. Like all of the games mentioned here, it's due in 1998. *–Steve Bauman*

MechWarrior III, MechCommander • *MicroProse* • *Windows 95*


MechWarrior III: Got you in my sights…



MechCommander: Battling 'bots in real-time



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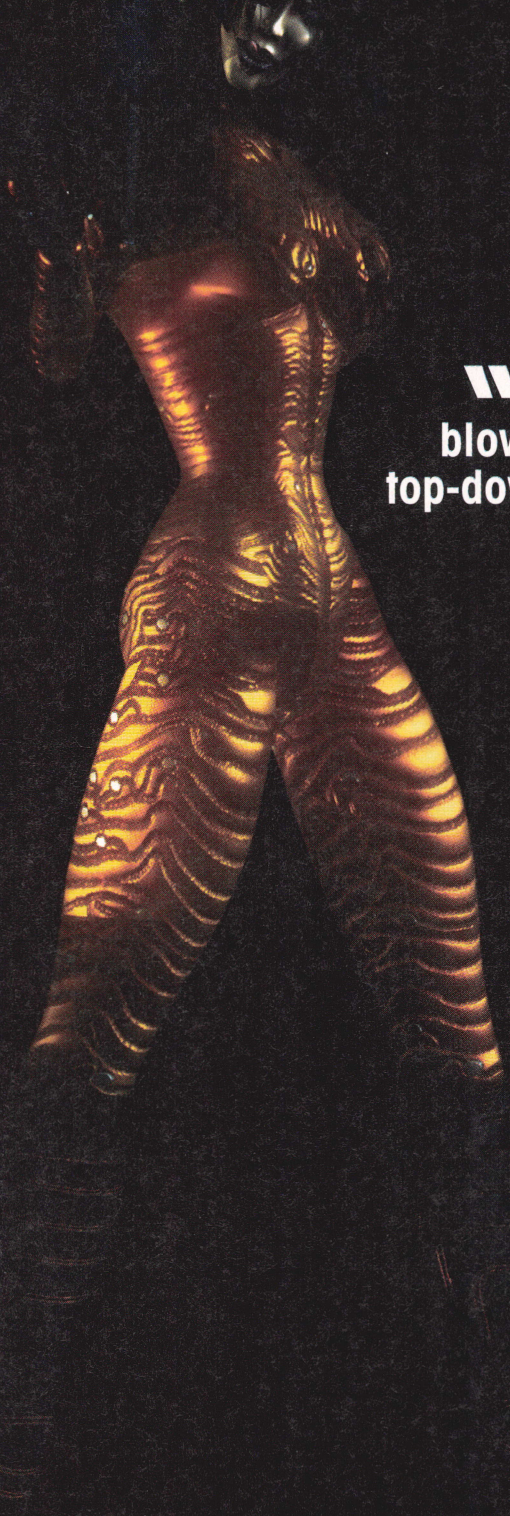

"This isometric shooter is going to blow you away...Meat Puppet takes the top-down action shooter to the next level."

–C/NET GAMECENTER.COM

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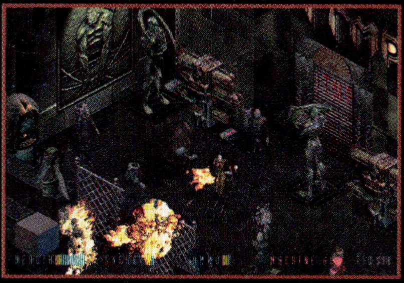

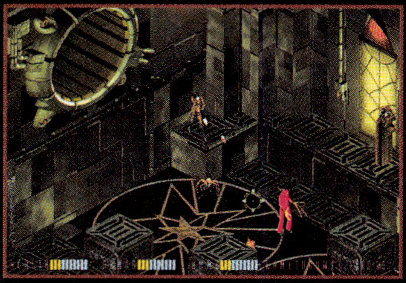

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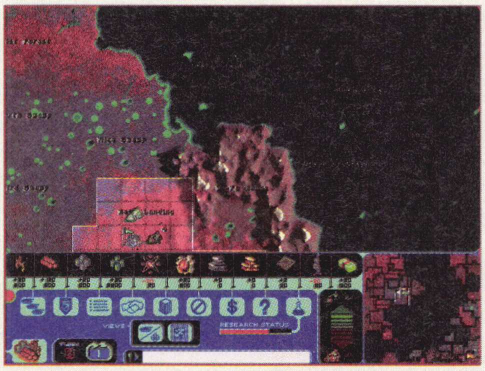
Deadlock 2

An evolution of the turn-based species

FIRST LOOK IN THE WORLD OF sequels, *Deadlock 2* would have to be considered more of an evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, product. It will attempt to address most of the complaints levied at the original, plus add enough new features to make it a compelling product for those who enjoyed the original.



This shot shows a preliminary version of the new interface

The original game pitted players against one another in order to conquer Gallius IV, and the sequel takes place after that battle. During the settlement, alien shrines were discovered, created by a race called the Ancients. The campaign of *Deadlock 2* will take players from planet to planet through the galaxy as they try to find the Ancient's homeworld.

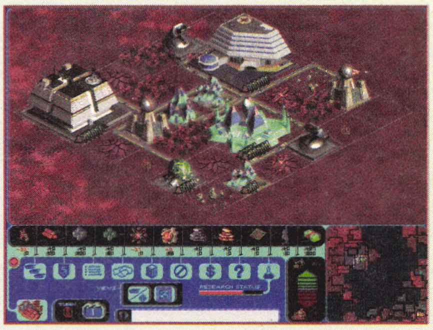
This campaign will have 42 scenarios, with separate campaign goals for the different races in the game. There are multiple victory conditions that must be satisfied in order to win (this is true in multiplayer as well).

There are 9 new combat units, including submarines, surface vessels and air units. Ground units now have two attack values, one for other ground units and another for air units. Attacks can now come from any of four directions (a limit of the original was that all city attacks came from the same direction), and they promise a "vastly" improved AI.

Other features include a map editor, a new graphical interface (the original's austere spreadsheet interface was a result of its having to run under Windows 3.1), new building graphics, and a revised technology tree that will allow you to take multiple paths to discovering technology.

Look for the *Deadlock 2* invasion this holiday season. *–Steve Bauman*

Deadlock 2 • *Accolade* • *Windows 95*



There will be a few new buildings and combat units

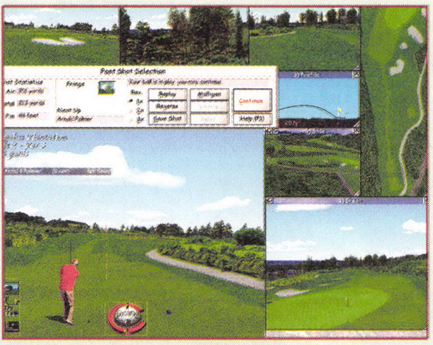
announced its incorporation. It's headed by award-winning designer **Lawrence Holland**, creator of ***X-Wing***, ***TIE Fighter***, ***Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe***, ***Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain*** and ***Battlehawks 1942***. A few years ago, Holland told this magazine that he was interested in working on a ***Civilization***-style strategy game, and considering his background in archaeology, it wouldn't be too much of a stretch… **Polygonal Jack** – According to sources at Accolade, the next version of their ***Jack Nicklaus Golf*** will use polygonal golfers, include 4-5 courses, and has a revised editor that will allow gamers to import their own art… **EA Sports in the final four** – Rumors out of their

Links LS '98

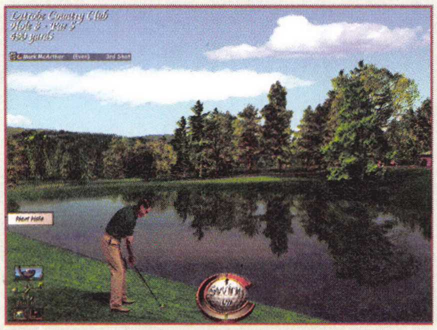
The world's finest golf game keeps getting better

FIRST LOOK *LINKS* HAS ALWAYS been on the cutting edge. The original game had superb VGA graphics. *Links 386* flew the flag for high-resolution SVGA graphics, and *Links LS* took the 24-bit color plunge. Even with these technological advances, it's been the gameplay and the variety of courses that's kept gamers coming back for more.

In the past, Access has released a new version every couple of years. With the amount of competition out there, it's not surprising that they're going to yearly releases. The big news is that *Links 98* will finally be a native Windows 95 and NT 4.0 application. One advantage of using these multitasking and multithreaded operating systems is that Access will be able to use "look ahead" rendering of holes, which will virtually eliminate the time spent waiting for redraws. Support for DirectPlay will improve multiplayer, with the game now offering native Internet, LAN and modem play for up to eight players at eight computers. A deal with GolfWeb and Mpath will bring sponsored weekly tournaments to the Internet.



Running at 1280x1024 allows you to have multiple views open at once. Try that in real life

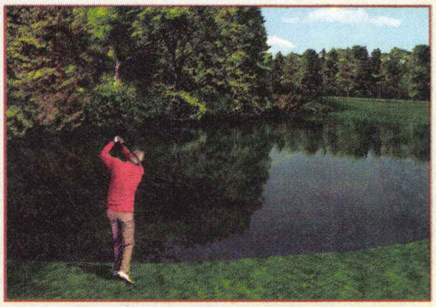


The reflecting water adds a dramatic touch

What would any discussion of *Links* be without mentioning the graphics? The already stunning visuals have been improved with spot animations (flags, airplanes, etc.) and reflective water. There are additional "smart" camera views, and when playing at resolutions above 800x600, you can have the main view in the center, with multiple camera views in additional windows. Finally, new digitized scorecards from the actual courses can be printed out to impress your co-workers.

Links LS '98 is scheduled for a June release, just in time to keep you from spending your summer being frustrated from playing the real thing. *–Steve Bauman*

Links LS 1998 Edition • *Access Software* • *Windows 95, NT 4.0*



Arnie tees off after taking a plunge in the drink

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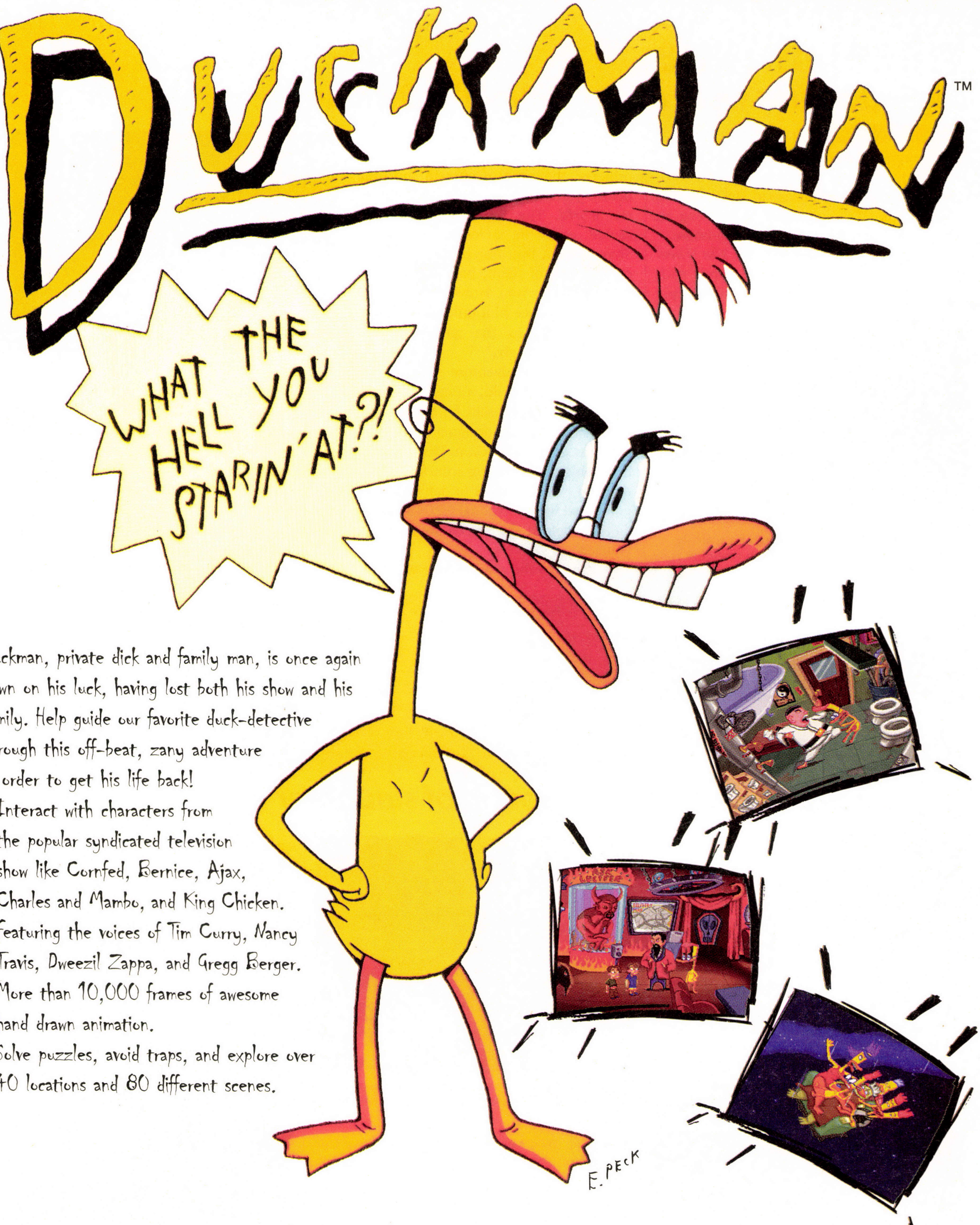
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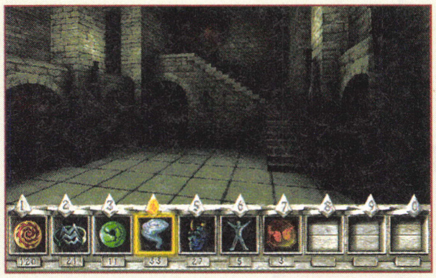
PIE

Wheel of Time

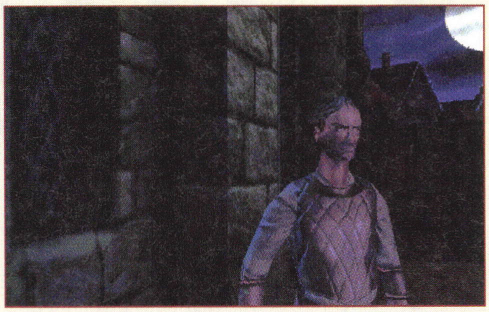
Legend begins work on an "Unreal" 3D game

FIRST LOOK WHEN WE LAST reported on the adaptation of Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* books (*CGS+ 60*), it was scheduled for a release in 1997 and was to be an epic 3D role-playing game using an engine that Legend was developing in-house.

That project has morphed into *The Wheel of Time*, a 3D action/strategy game with "role-playing elements" that utilizes Epic MegaGame's *Unreal* engine. Less story-driven than any of Legend's previous projects, the game occurs in the time before Jordan's first book, *The Eye of the World*. The Dark One has been sealed away in a locked prison at Shayol Ghul, but four people, and you control one of them, have figured out how to release him. However, not all of them want to see him unleashed on the world again, so the gameplay will change accordingly.


It wasn't long ago that this would be a nicely rendered static shot. Now you can navigate it in true 3D

This isn't an adventure game in the typical Legend mold, though the still screen shots could easily be mistaken for static scenes from, say, designer Glen Dahlgren's previous game *DeathGate*. The *Unreal* engine is capable of generating scenes of great beauty, from colorful towns to dank dungeons, all populated with polygonal NPCs and monsters. Take a look at the screen shots and see for yourself.


An early polygonal character

Because of the release date of the product (it's now scheduled for release in early 1999), all we can say at this point is that deployment will play a big role in winning (and makes up the strategic portion of the game), the combat system is spell-based and the non-player character (NPC) AI couldn't be mistaken for that of your average *Doom* monster. Gamers interested in updates on the game's development can check out www.wheeloftime.com. *–Steve Bauman*

Wheel of Time • *Legend Entertainment* • *Windows 95*

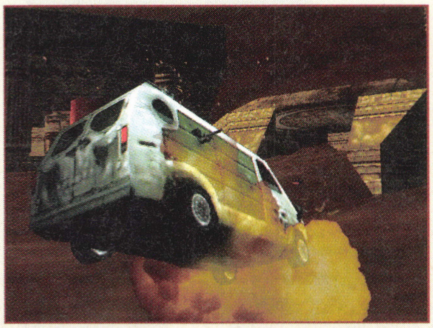
San Mateo office indicate that EA Sports is working on a college basketball game that utilizes the ***NBA Live 97*** engine. More when we know more... **Agents of Name Changes** – MicroProse is now calling their upcoming superhero turn-based strategy game ***Guardians: Agents of Justice***. The game has received a graphic makeover and now sports new 16-bit color visuals... **Sony goes multiplayer** – Sony is working on PC versions of ***JetMoto*** and ***Twisted Metal 2***, with enhancements over their PlayStation counterparts (including 3D card support and network play). They're also working on ***ArmorGeddon***, an arcade tank game playable only on the Internet... **Visit the Lands**

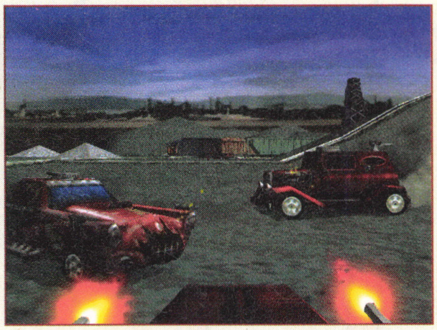
Redline

The roads are alive with the sound of slaughter

FIRST LOOK AMERICA'S OBSESSED with both violence and the automobile, so it shouldn't be surprising that a combination of the two is so intoxicating. Following in the wake of *Interstate '76* and the upcoming *Carmageddon* is *Redline*, a drive and kill sort of game that is one of the few brave games that will require a 3D accelerator card.

Players will align themselves with various gangs and wage war on their opposition or battle, deathmatch-style, with up to 16 players. The battle isn't fought solely in your cars – unlike other games (but like *Necrodome*), you will have to leave your car and run around on foot in order to pick up powerups and/or salvage parts from other vehicles. You can booby trap your car (the old "spike that shoots through the steering wheel" is a favorite) to protect it, but fail and other players can steal your wheels.


Anyone with a van conversion deserves this fate

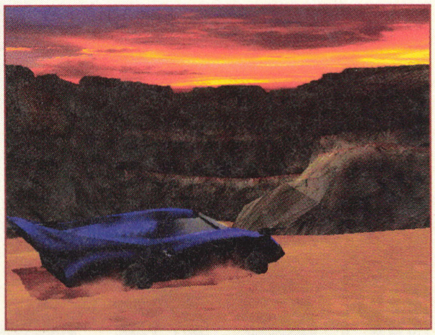

Check out how far you can see in the distance. That's what 3D acceleration brings to the table

The game's 3D environments are complex and enormous (much like *Carmageddon*'s), with plenty of areas for strategic sniping. One thing that the designers are justifiably proud of is the ability to destroy buildings and overpasses in the environment. Spot a guy driving on a freeway above? Shoot out the supports and watch him fall.

When playing the game over the Internet, a server will store your statistics, and as you accumulate victories you'll increase rank in your gang. If you get high enough in the hierarchy, you can become the leader. At some other point, you'll be able to create your own game, complete with custom logos of your own design (that you can then use in the game).

Redline is scheduled for release by the end of the year. *–Steve Bauman*

Redline • *Accolade* • *Windows 95*


Tearing along the desert in my pseudo-Jaguar

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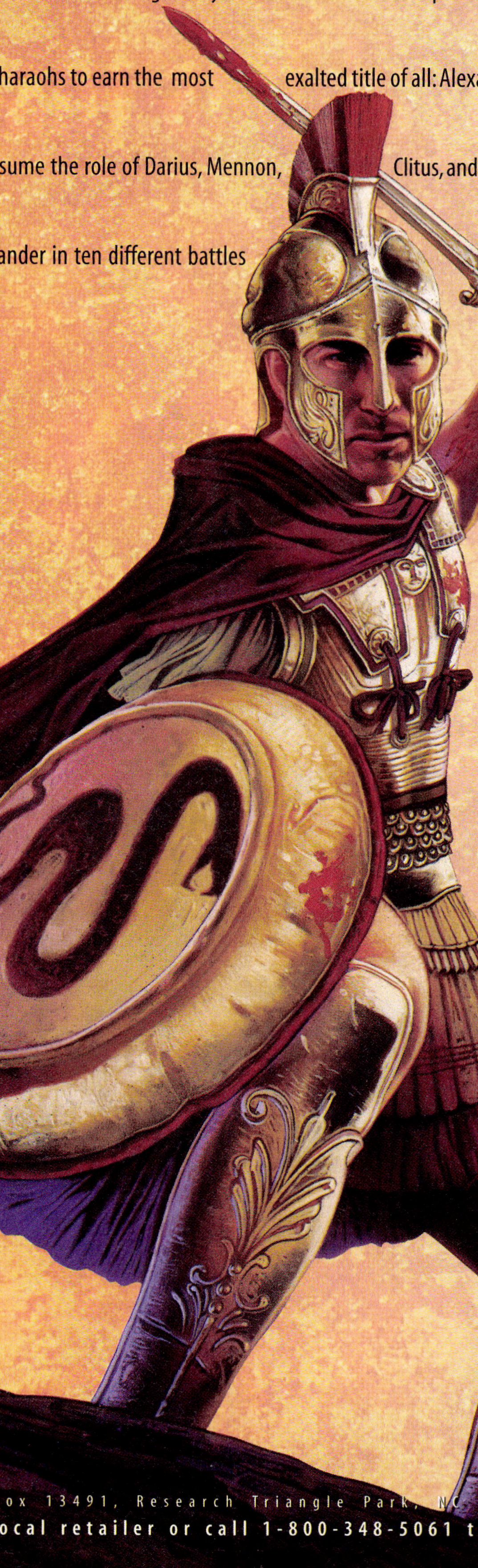

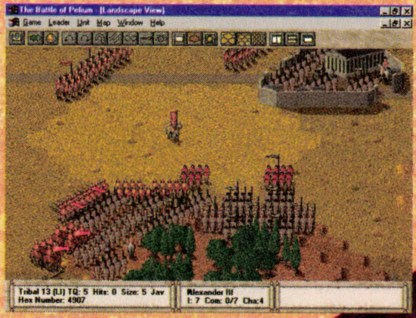
The Battle of Pelium - [Landscape View]
Game Leader Unit Map Window Help

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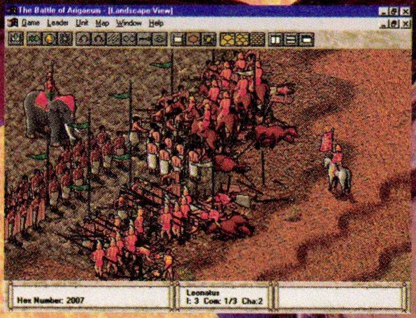
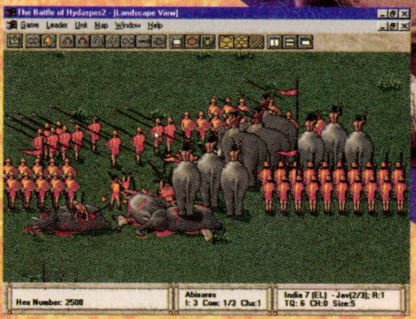
Hex Number: 4907

Alexander III
I: 7 Com: 0/7 Cha:4


The Battle of Arigaeum - [Landscape View]
Game Leader Unit Map Window Help

Hex Number: 2007

Leonatus
I: 3 Com: 1/3 Cha:2


The Battle of Hydaspes2 - [Landscape View]
Game Leader Unit Map Window Help

Hex Number: 2508

Abisares
I: 3 Com: 1/3 Cha:1

India 7 (EL) - Jav(2/3); R:1
TQ: 6 CH:0 Size:5

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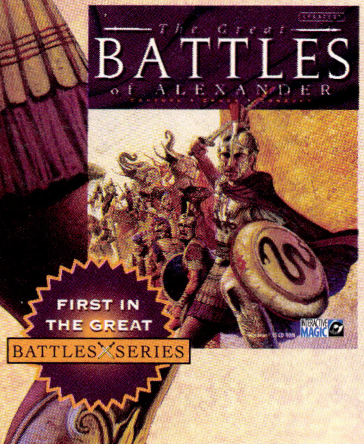
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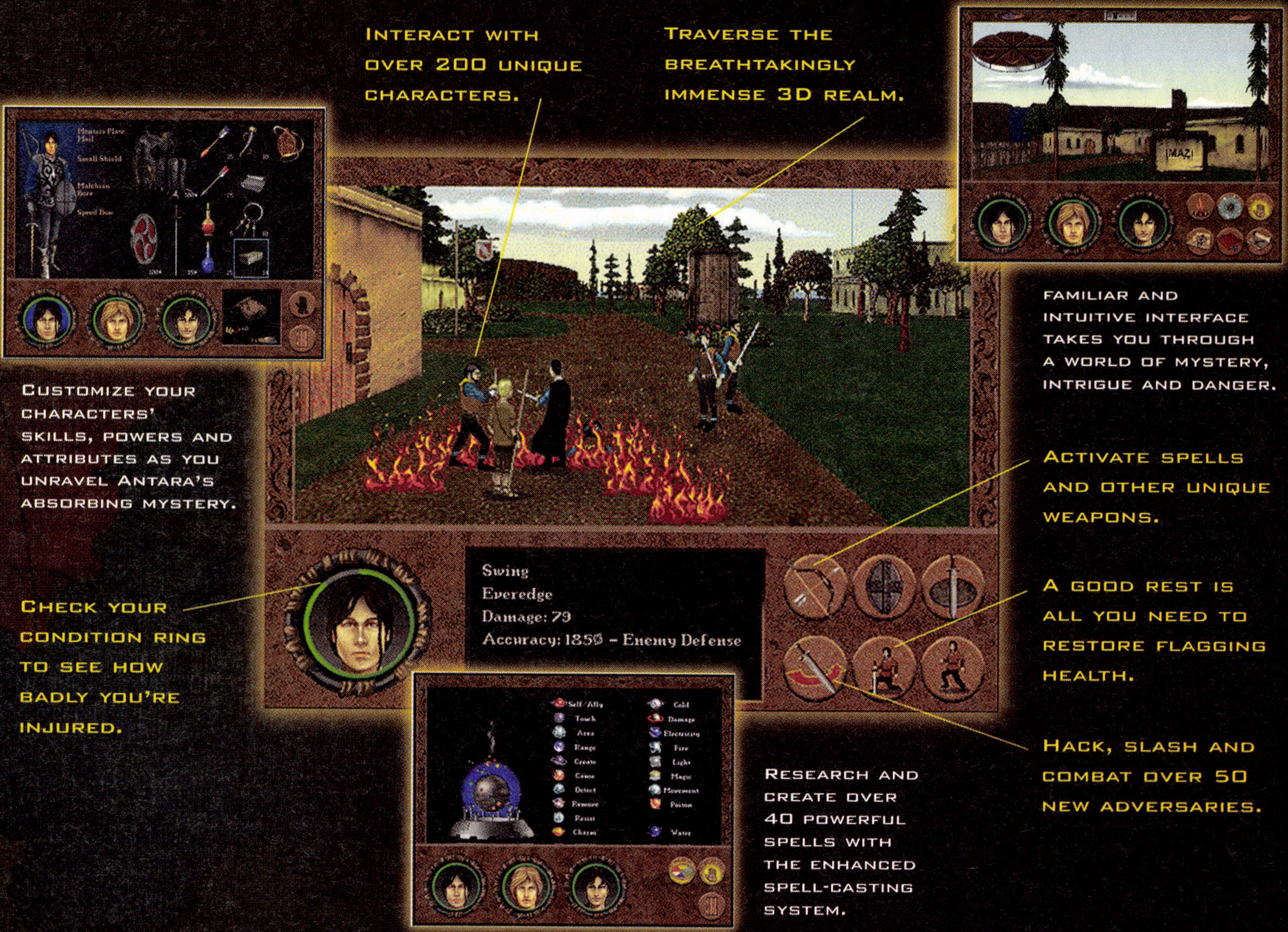

Swing
Everedge
Damage: 79
Accuracy: 1850 – Enemy Defense

Montain Plate Mail
Small Shield
Malchian Bow
Speed Bow
IMAZI
Self/Ally
Touch
Area
Range
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Hardball 6

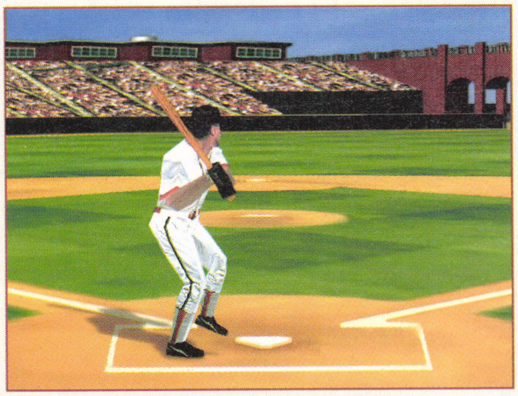
The old crowd favorite enters the 3D world

FIRST LOOK IT WOULD APPEAR that people forecasting the death of Major League Baseball forgot to tell game publishers. This year there will be a splashy new entries from Virgin (*Grand Slam 97*) and Microsoft, plus updates to the *Tony La Russa*, *Triple Play*, and *Front Page Sports* lines. Also on the way is the sixth version of the oldest baseball series, Accolade's *Hardball*.

The *Hardball* series has been the most popular (sales-wise) PC baseball game for a number of years, mostly due to its superior graphics and arcade gameplay. On the graphics front, *Hardball 6* will now sport a fashionable 3D graphics engine, with motion-captured polygonal players. The game will support, and perhaps even require (or "highly recommend"), a 3D accelerator card.

Also new to this edition are (finally) both Major League Baseball licenses, meaning real players and teams. The game will ship with all 30 of the current Major League stadiums, plus a few "classics" for that old-time baseball feeling.

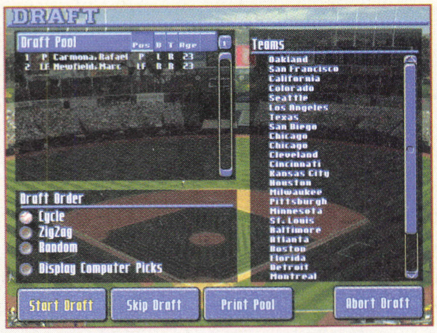
On the gameplay front, there are only a few tweaks here and there because, as Accolade says, the game is quite popular, so why mess too much with a good thing. The statistics engine will receive some work (but those baseball *grognards* are never happy), as will the overall game logic. Along those same lines, there will be a few minor interface improvements in the setup screens.



An early shot of the new polygonal players

Scheduled for a release in August, the demo shown was less than 12 hours old, and was running at high speed, in a window, on a machine with a Matrox Mystique 3D card. The frame rate was good, with all of the usual swooping 3D effects, but should be even better (and better looking) when run on a 3Dfx- or Rendition-based cards.

Hardball 6 • *Accolade* • *Windows 95*



Draft Pool

			Pos	B	T	Age
1	P	Carmona, Rafael	P	L	R	23
2	LF	Newfield, Marc	LF	R	R	23

Draft Order

● Cycle
○ ZigZag
○ Random

○ Display Computer Picks

Teams

Oakland
San Francisco
California
Colorado
Seattle
Los Angeles
Texas
San Diego
Chicago
Chicago
Cleveland
Cincinnati
Kansas City
Houston
Milwaukee
Pittsburgh
Minnesota
St. Louis
Baltimore
Atlanta
Boston
Florida
Detroit
Montreal

The old crowd favorite enters the 3D world

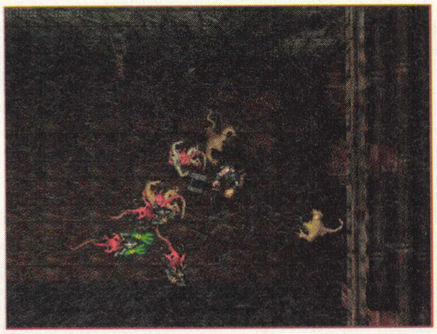
– ...of Lore, that is. Westwood has announced that their long-delayed ***Lands of Lore II*** will be available in August. In other news, Virgin has named Westwood's **Brett Sperry** their President of Worldwide Development... **Duke, meet Quake** – GT Interactive has announced that they have the exclusive rights to the upcoming ***Duke Nukem 3D*** sequel, called ***Duke Nukem Forever***. In other news, that sequel will utilize the ***Quake II*** engine. In other Duke news, GT has teamed up with ***Penthouse*** magazine to produce an **adults-only** version of *Duke Nukem* called ***Duke Nukem 3D: Penthouse Paradise***, which will be available for download from **www.gtinteractive.com**. This will no

MageSlayer

The devil's making them do it

FIRST LOOK WILL THE OLD ARCADE classic *Gauntlet* turn out to be the most influential game of 1997? Blizzard's mega-hit *Diablo* owes a lot to that seminal game. Does this sound familiar: enter an isometrically rendered dungeon with one of four characters, fight a bunch of beasts in real-time, and do it with some of your closest friends.

The latest game to pay "homage" to that classic is *MageSlayer*, a fantasy action/CRPG developed by those gaming fools at Raven Software, creators of the like-minded *Heretic* and *Hexen* (*CGS+* "Best 3D Action Game" for 1995; see the preview of the sequel *Hexen II* on page 52). *MageSlayer* will feature more than 30 levels that span five unique environments, including a sewer level, temples and tombs. There are more than a dozen creatures to kill, including the usual assortment of WereRats, Frost Giants, Barbarian Toads (?) and that old fantasy standby, Dwarves.

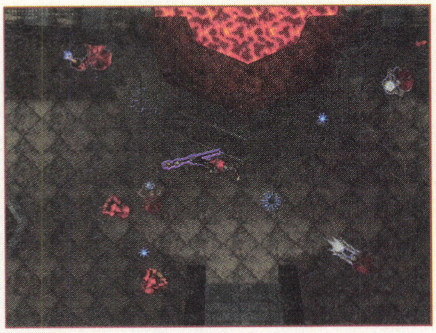


Lots o' fun fun fun gore

In keeping with it's RPG-lite focus, there are four character classes to choose from: Warlock, Arch-Demon, Inquisitor and Earthlord. There will also be over 50 spells and magical objects, with cool names like the Chaos Bolt and the Hammer Quake (hmm). The multiplayer options include support for 2-8 players in deathmatch, capture the flag and team play.

It may not sound particularly original, but ultimately, as *Diablo* has shown, a successful game is more about execution than anything. We'll see later this year if *MageSlayer* is up to Raven's usual standard for excellence. *–Steve Bauman*

MageSlayer • *GT Interactive*



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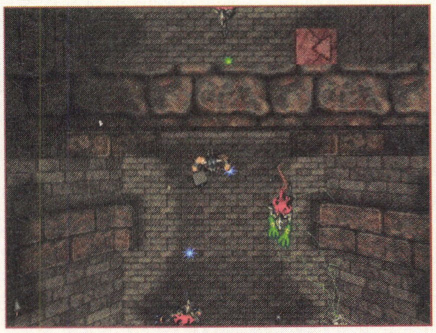

...can't place my finger on it...

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Mystery Word Grid

					MYSTERY WORD
	H				___
		E			___
P	I	N	C	H	W
	R				___
S					___

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCH	W	PRESS	K	BLAST	A	WRECK	D
BREAK	Z	PUNCH	S	SPRAY	C	TURBO	V
STOMP	T	STAND	R	PRESS	E	DREAM	O
CRUSH	I	SCORE	H	SLANT	L	CHASE	P

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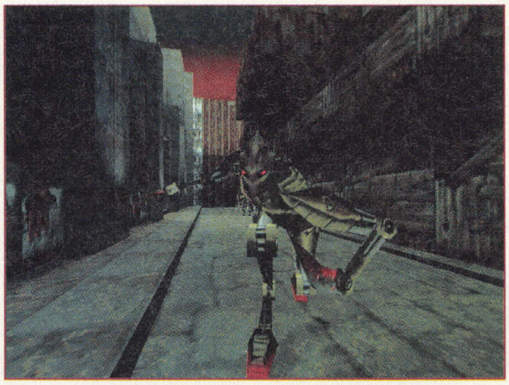
Requiem

Attempting to be the "real" Wolfenstein 3D

FIRST LOOK MANY LONG-TIME gamers consider the original *Castle Wolfenstein* to be one of the finest action/adventures ever created. When id Software created *Wolfenstein 3D*, they created a new genre (the 3D action game), but something was lost in the translation from the original, a level of subtlety that few action games bother with.

Developer Cyclone Studios is positioning their upcoming 3D game *Requiem: Wrath of the Fallen* as more of a *Castle Wolfenstein* than *Wolfenstein 3D*. They're doing this by incorporating advanced enemy AI and forcing the player to use their brains, rather than brawn, to complete the complex missions' goals.

The storyline is bound to generate some controversy, and some of the details may be changed by release. A legion of rebellious angels, called The Fallen, have descended on Creation to take control. You're a loyal angel, one of the Chosen, and you take on a material form in order to engage the Fallen across multiple worlds. You'll be able to take on any material form, which will allow you to take control of, say, a General and give you the ability to walk right into a military base to assassinate someone (the soldiers will salute you as you enter). You also won't be able walk around with your weapon drawn, as guards will automatically attack (they may anyway, or they may just say, "Move on"). The AI will also have enemies ducking behind corners, calling for reinforcements, or even retreating.



Touring the unfriendly streets

The 3D engine is right on the cutting edge, featuring polygonal characters and *Quake*-like environments. They won't be the standard mazes or dungeons; instead, you'll find space ports that have people wandering around or warships flying through space.

Requiem is scheduled for release in the first quarter of 1998.

Requiem • *3DO* • *Windows 95*

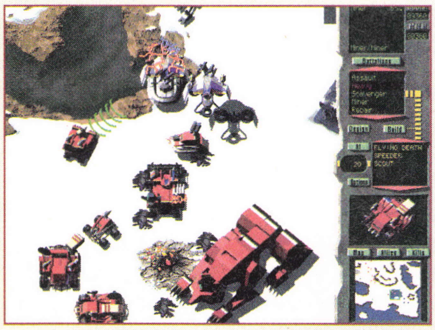
doubt win a Codie in the "family entertainment" category… **If you can't get enough chess** – …then you've probably already visited ***Chessmaster Online*** at **www.chessmaster.com**. In other chess news, Mindscape has announced ***Chessmaster 5500 Gold***, a new 32-bit Pentium-optimized version. It's fully integrated with *Chessmaster Online* and supports the **TASC Smartboard** for play against the computer or Internet opponent on a real chessboard… **Wizards of the Coast buys TSR** – Wizards of the Coast (creators of ***Magic: The Gathering***) and TSR have signed a letter of intent that would allow Wizards of the Coast to purchase TSR, Inc (creators of ***Advanced Dungeons &***

Extreme Tactics

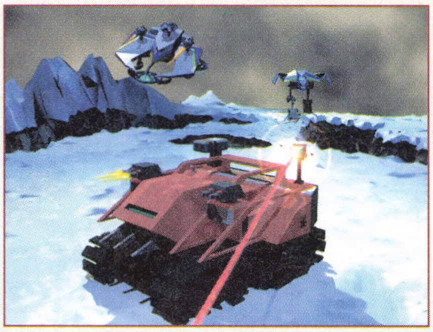
General or engineer? How about both?

FIRST LOOK IN THE *VERY* CROWDED field of real-time strategy gaming, if you want to stand out from the herd you've got to do something different, preferably something beyond the superficialities of graphics or story, something at the core of the gameplay. The folks at Media Station believe they've achieved that "something different" in their upcoming game, *Extreme Tactics*, and it can best be summarized with one word: engineering. Unlike most games in the genre, this time out you get to design the vehicles you take into battle instead of relying on those provided you.

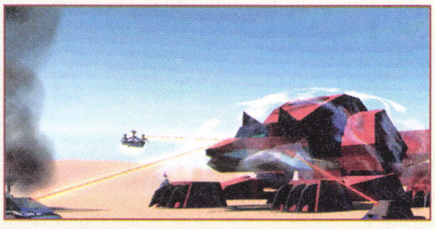
The game has a one sentence story line: two clans battling on a distant planet over control of a scarce resource; one, the Hammerhawk Clan excels at manufacturing flying and walking vehicles, while the other, the Bloodfox Clan, excels at more conventional land-based vehicles. Instead of building up bases, you must design your vehicles from a variety of elements: start with one of 15 chassis types and add weapons (20 types), mobility types (seven, including walker legs and fly jets), even special systems like stealth detection. Hundreds of combinations will give you flexibility, but as the resources to actually build the vehicles are scarce, you'll have to make tough design and production decisions. While you can design offline, outside of the missions, you can also modify designs or create new ones in the heat of battle, reacting as needed to new enemy systems.



Flying, walking, crawling–sounds like a zoo, but instead it's the mechanical menagerie of Extreme Tactics



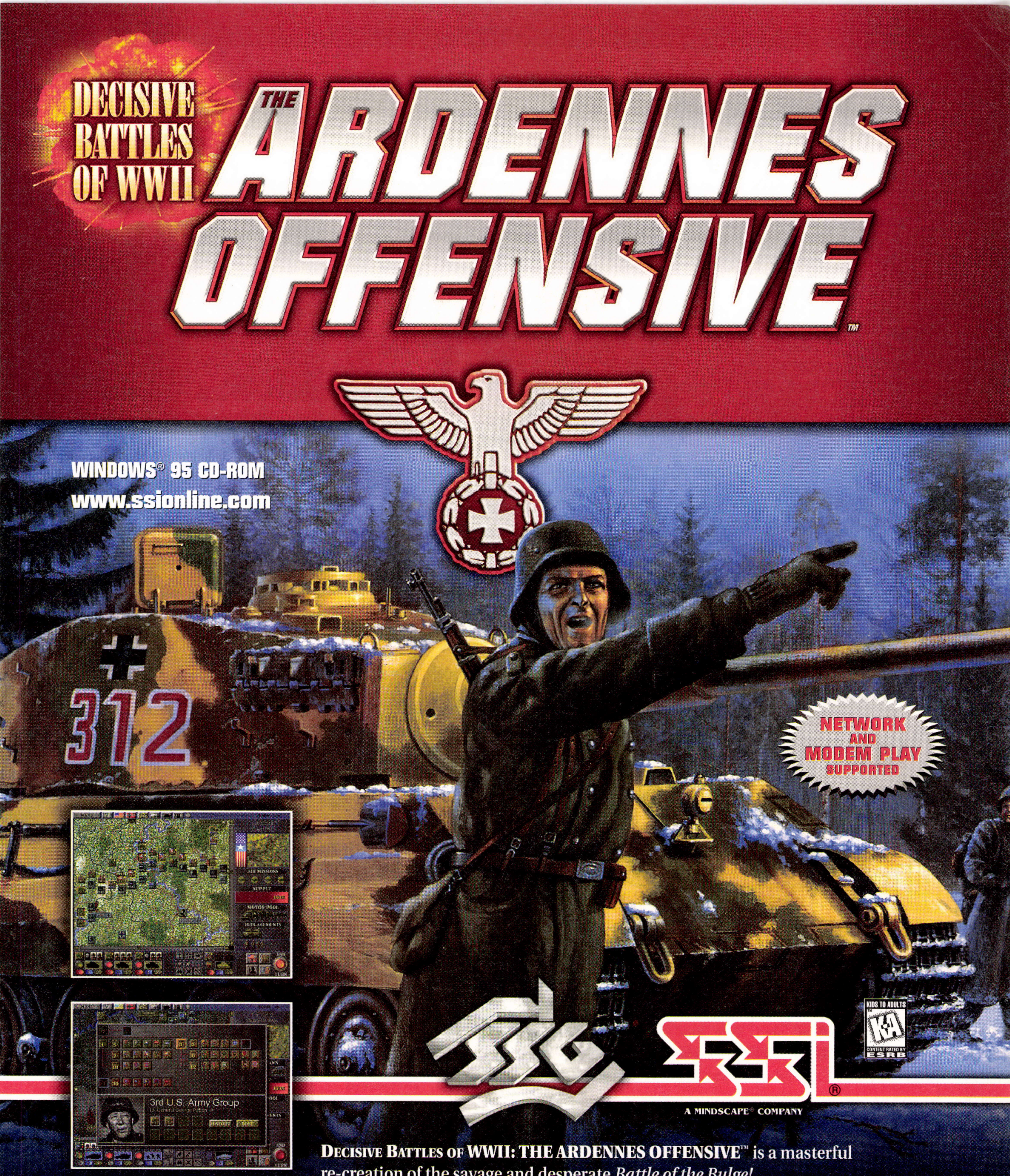
Expect to battle across plenty of different terrain types



As you design your vehicles, don't forget both offenses and defenses

Extreme Tactics will include many of the "standards" of the genre–multiple terrain types, two single player campaigns, multiplayer skirmish options (modem, LAN, Internet with up to eight players), mining vehicles, command centers, etc.–plus several interesting additions–programmable AI for player controlled war machines, computer viruses, and more. If they stick to their plan, MediaStation will finish the game in or around June then spent the next several months testing it thoroughly while making any tweaks a future publisher (the game doesn't have one yet) may require. A demo should be available early this Summer, and the final product this Fall. *–Scott Udell*

Extreme Tactics • *Media Station* • *Windows 95, Macintosh*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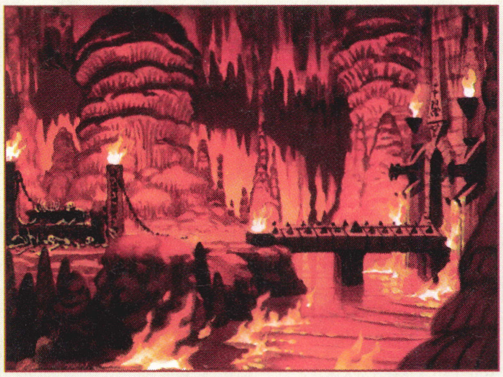
The Forsaken

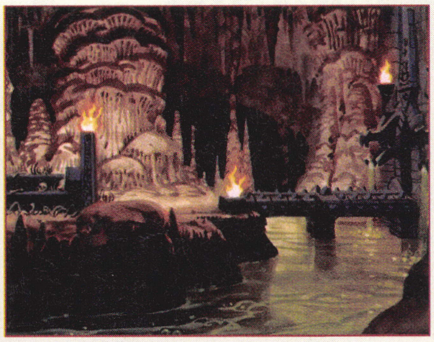
Locke vs. Godzilla – hi-res style

FIRST LOOK DEVELOPED BY the *Total Mayhem* developer Cinematix Studios, *The Forsaken* is a third person role-playing game which has joined the trickle of upcoming RPG's using 16 bit color.

In order to provide detailed richness, there will be only one main character rather than a party for the player to control. You are Locke, a buff but basic strong-hero type, who has been exiled from the mainland of his world and must clear his name through his behavior and actions. The story is large and branching, but the fate of the hero is decidedly in your hands.

You will be able to tailor him according to the usual RPG pummel, perplex or prestidigitate schools of thought, and will interact with about 15 well-versed characters (as detailed as your own) in the town areas, and 30 or so monsters in the surrounding regions and dungeons.


May the fires of Hell bring you to rest


Home is where the gargoyle is

The magic system consists of rune stones, each of which represents a word of power. One assembles them on a rack like *Scrabble* tiles into the various spells they are able to comprise, then clicks on the set of stones to cast the spell.

Artist Dan Bouvies, who did the box art for *Lords of Midnight*, has designed the art for the characters and the city. The characters will be full 3D polygons with fluid animations, and is 3-D accelerated using Direct3D. Real time lighting enhances day and night transitions, with particular attention to movement and color.

Target audience? *Diablo* lovers who want more texture. *Diablo* lovers who don't want multi-character parties? We'll see. *–Cindy Yans*

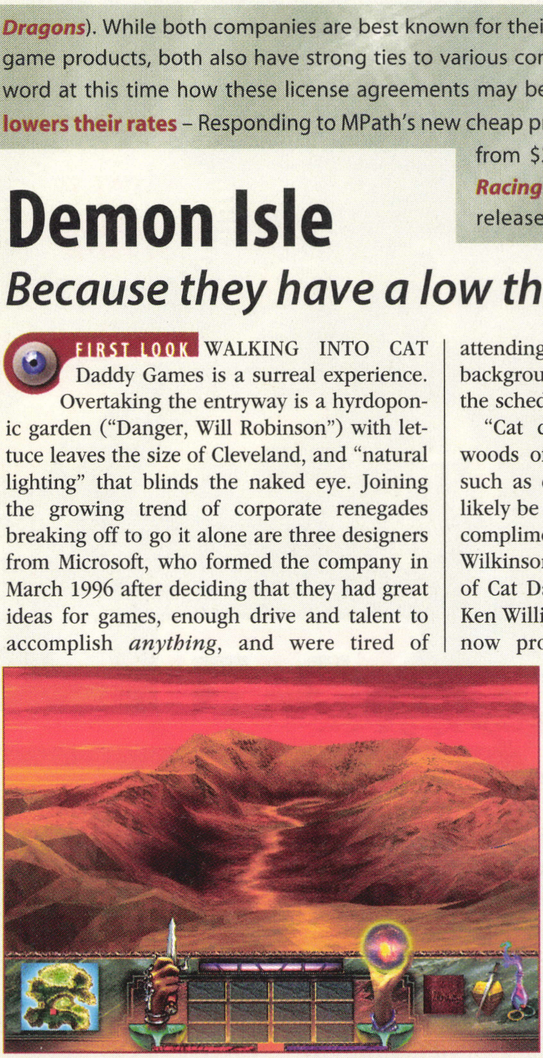
The Forsaken • *Eidos Interactive* • *Windows 95*

Dragons). While both companies are best known for their board, "pen 'n' paper," and card-game products, both also have strong ties to various computer game projects. There is no word at this time how these license agreements may be affected by the purchase... **TEN lowers their rates** – Responding to MPath's new cheap price, the Total Entertainment Network announced that their flat rate service will drop from $29.95 to $19.95 per month. Also online will be new games like ***EF2000, NASCAR Racing 2***, ***Blood*** and ***Shadow Warrior***... **Microsoft controls the Mac** – Microsoft has released a Macintosh version of their excellent **SideWinder 3D Pro** joystick...■

Demon Isle

Because they have a low threshold for boredom

FIRST LOOK WALKING INTO CAT Daddy Games is a surreal experience. Overtaking the entryway is a hyrdoponic garden ("Danger, Will Robinson") with lettuce leaves the size of Cleveland, and "natural lighting" that blinds the naked eye. Joining the growing trend of corporate renegades breaking off to go it alone are three designers from Microsoft, who formed the company in March 1996 after deciding that they had great ideas for games, enough drive and talent to accomplish *anything*, and were tired of attending meetings to decide "what color this background should be," or meetings to plan the scheduling of future meetings.

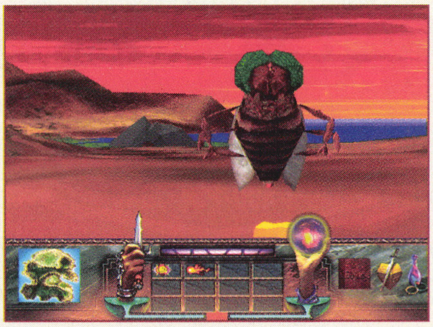

Fractally generated landscape mimics nature

"Cat daddy" is an expression from the woods of Indiana – perform a cool exploit such as dodging a falling tree and you will likely be called a "real cat daddy." No greater compliment than *that*. Ryan Haveson, Patrick Wilkinson and Harley Howe are the daddies of Cat Daddy Games, and caught the eye of Ken Williams at last year's E3. Hence Sierra is now producing *Demon Isle*, their initial endeavor, a first-person action game with RPG elements. Targeting *Diablo* aficionados (note the game name), the small but unequivocally talented team seems to be doing everything right (conceptually, at this stage).

They believe that more character versatility, a first person view for immersion enhancement, instantaneous weapon switching and even point transference will add greatly to the hack 'n' slash experience. The backstory ("Uh, backstory? We got a backstory? What was it anyway? Oh yeah...") involves an evil island bridged to a mainland. The bridge was destroyed but will keep reappearing until the evil is destroyed from the source. Go to Demon Isle. Kill everything. Win the game. Simple, but so is *Diablo*... Multiplayer gaming will support up to 16 players over Internet, LAN or Internet-LAN combination.

3D modeling, full 16-bit color, support for MMX technology, fractally generated terrains and Sam I Am, the stunning Solomon Island Eclectus parrot – all contribute greatly to what could put Cat Daddy on the map. Look for it late this year. *–Cindy Yans*

Demon Isle • *Sierra* • *Windows 95*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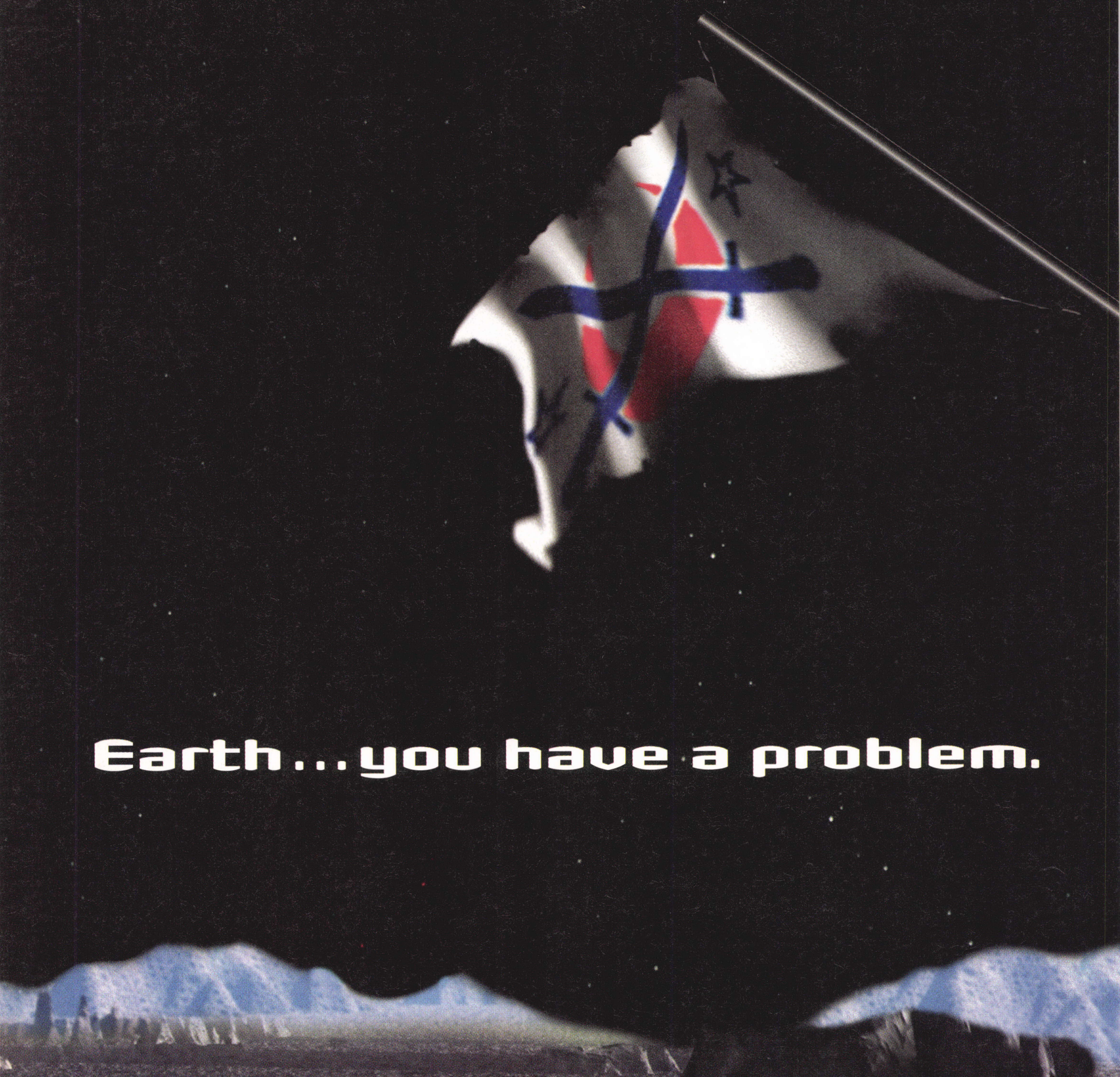
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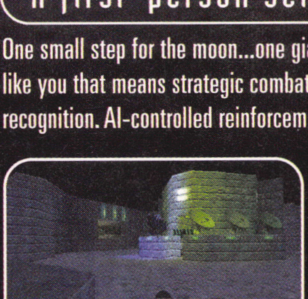
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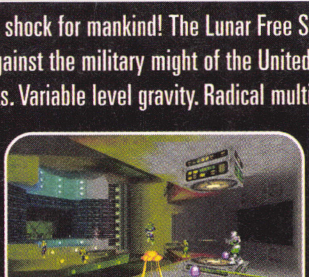
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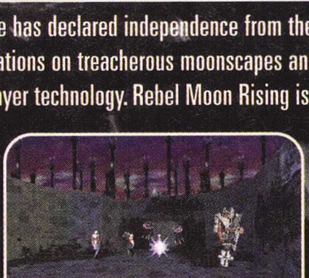
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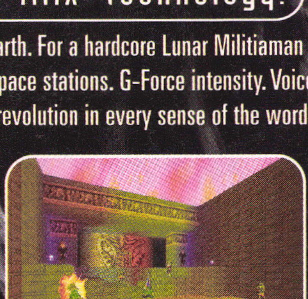
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The calm before the Storm

ION Storm readies a torrent of action, role-playing and strategy titles

WHEN EX-ID DESIGNER John Romero formed ION Storm, 3D action gamers held their collective breath waiting for the announcement of the first products. They're here, and it should come as no surprise that the games incorporate elements from different genres (the limitations of id's purist design didn't leave much room for creativity). Over the next two years, you'll see two Windows 95-based 3D action role-playing games and a real-time strategy game, all based on the *Quake* engine. Eidos will be publishing all three of the games.

The Ion Storm team trying to look cool

The first game, due out later this year, is *Daikatana*, headed up by Romero himself. This first-person action game will take place in four different time periods. While focusing on action, your character will have different skills and experience points that accumulate during the game. It will include a generous assortment of monsters and weapons (64 and 26 respectively).

The product headed up by Tom Hall is called *Anachronox*, described as a role-playing game with a third-person view of your character and a "smart" camera that, unlike *Tomb Raider*, isn't tied to an over-the-shoulder view. Finally, we'll have a real-time strategy game called *Stranded*, with design by Todd Porter, formerly of Origin and 7th Level (where he produced and designed *Dominion*). *–Steve Bauman*

Sirtech expands lineup

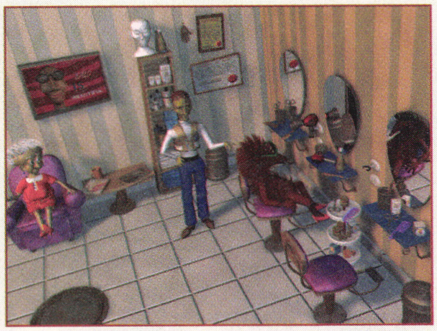
Deal with publisher Telstar to result in 11 new titles

SIRTECH HAS SIGNED A DEAL WITH London-based Telstar Electronic Studios, creators of the recently released *Fable*, that will give them the distribution rights to eleven upcoming PC and console titles. The titles will mark Sirtech's entry into a number of genres, from racing to 3D platform games.

The first game out will be *Wrecking Crew*, a *Super Mario Kart*/*Wacky Wheels*-esque racing game featuring silly cars with even sillier drivers. Speaking of silly, that's the only word to describe the point-and-click adventure *Granny*, which may or may not be renamed *Dementia*. The difference between those two names says more about the game than anything, but needless to say it follows the journey of an old lady as she passes through 14 bizarre realms. Think illogically and all will be logical. Another graphic adventure, *TQ*, features a time-travel storyline and high-resolution graphics.

Virus is another odd title, being a real-time strategy game that's fought in the files and folders of your own hard drive. The game uses your file structure to simulate the invasion of a virus in your system, and it's up to you to head it off. Obviously no damage is done to your hard drive, but collectors of, ahem, "artwork" from the Internet may worry about the program option that uses images from your hard drive as textures in the game's 3D mode.

3D graphics play a big role in three other games, *Excalibur 2555*, *Joe Blow* and *Siege*. *Excalibur* is third-person 3D adventure game where you must recover the legendary sword, while *Joe Blow* is a *Super Mario 64*-styled 3D platform game. *Siege* is a real-time strategy game simulating castle sieges, with each brick of every castle modeled in 3D, meaning you can specially target areas and watch them fall.

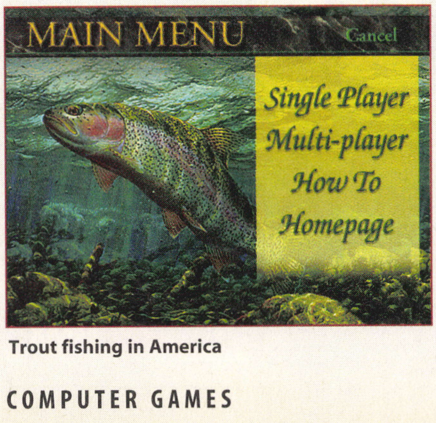

The wacked out world of Granny/Dementia

Finally, fans of traditional Sirtech products will be ecstatic to hear that work is progressing on *Jagged Alliance II*, *Wizardry VIII* and *Eclipse* (working title). Look for additional coverage on these titles in future issues. *–Steve Bauman*

Ski racing meets the reel thing

Mogul madness and fish-stories from Front Page Sports

KATE KLOOS, PRODUCER FOR ALL OF Sierra's *Front Page Sports* titles and completely *impassioned* about them says, "*Trophy Bass* is an absolute kick in the pants! All it takes is to catch one fish and it's really one of those kind of 'let your mind relax' type of games where you don't get all anxious and your shoulders don't get all tense like this [does Quasimodo imitation]; the only thing is you really just have to catch a fish!"



Trout fishing in America

Trophy Rivers, shipping in fourth quarter 1997, leverages from all of the things the design team learned from *Trophy Bass*, except it will involve (you guessed it) river fishing. The lure of fly-fishing (no pun intended) is what so many anglers find most romantic about the sport and in *Trophy Rivers*, they will have the chance to cast delicate dry flies on a 8x tippet, drag heavy spinners and crankbaits across the bottom with stout baitcasting gear – or practically anything in between. Settings will include five legendary rivers including New Brunswick's Miramichi River, Arkansas' White River and Montana's Big Hole, and will provide local species, stream topography, rapids and weather conditions. Multiple tournament modes include winner-take-all "best fish" derbies and "single fly" competitions.

If you can't get to Aspen this winter, you may want to take a look at *Ski Racing*, featuring six realistically simulated downhill courses at world-class resorts and five events from which to choose: Downhill, Slalom, Giant Slalom, Super G. or Combined – in single, tournament and career play. Accurately modeled 3D courses with realistic physics modeling send you careening through trees, rocks, cliffs gates, barriers and cheering crowds – not *literally*, though, at least not after the graphics engine is fine tuned. *–Cindy Yans*

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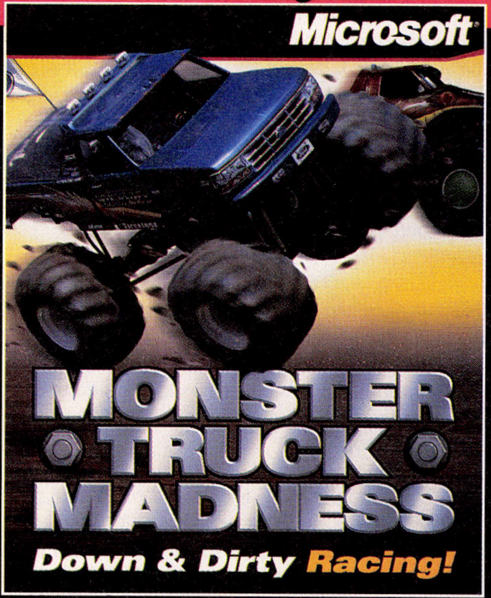
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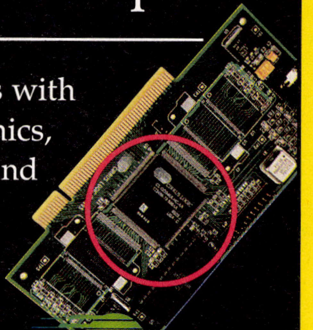

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Ultima

Playing in the Garden of Eden

By
Cindy Yans

"During the earliest span of the age of darkness, found in the writings of only the most aged of manuscripts, lived a world born of mystic arts and ancient sorcery: Sosaria..."

Sosaria, that came to be Britannia – the world of Ultima – has undergone amazing transitions since its nativity in 1979. Rising from the antediluvian lands of the Apple II, the Atari 800 and the Commodore 64, the series has captured the hearts of multitudes. From *Ultima I-III*, the Age of Darkness, through *Ultima IV-VI*, the Age of Enlightenment, *Ultima VII-VII*, the Guardian Saga and finally *Ultima Underworld I* and *II* and *Worlds of Ultima I* and *II*, one man has overseen the cradling and nurturing of this world. "The Avatar?" you gasp with reverence. No.

With his steel blue, intense gaze, undying enthusiasm and esoteric jewelry, Richard Garriot, perhaps better known as Lord British, has become the Willie Wonka of the world of role-playing. This is a man whose fantasies have been waiting for release since his age of cognizance (which cynics predict to be still a decade or so away, but ignore them...) and which reach to us from his very soul. When he was two years of age, it was all anyone could do to confiscate his sword and rip him from the backs of galloping llamas. Eventually, when there was no more controlling him, he begot *Akalabeth*.

Lord British – the wonder years

He pulls an ancient box from under the desk. "Ya gotta see this," said Garriot, "Some young kid sent me a letter and said that he had an extra *Ultima II*, and did I want it? So there are only a couple of them around here and I said 'sure,' and decided to send him one of these as a momento." He pulled out a Ziploc bag from the box, and blew the dust off.

"*Akalabeth*. It was based on some of the games I wrote in high school. In 1979, I had access to an Apple II computer, so I was able to add 3D perspective view dungeon graphics. I was working in a ComputerLand store as a salesperson, and my manager said I should really consider publishing it. So I spent $200 on Ziploc bags and cover sheets in 1979, and I published that game. Of the only eight I sold in that ComputerLand, one found its way to a computer publishing company in California. They called me on the phone and said that there were plane tickets waiting for me at the airport. I flew to California, signed a piece of paper, and they started sending me money. I didn't like the original package, so I had a second one done by Denis Loubet who's done the covers for every Ultima since then. I was 19 years old when that was published. After that game was finished, I said, `Gee, that made a lot of money, and I never intended to publish it. If I were to really write one with the intention of publishing it, I could really make some money,' and that's when I started work on the first *Ultima*. This sold even better than *Akalabeth*. So I said, `If I were to write this in assembly language, it'd be an even better game!' so I wrote *Ultima II*. I had sort of a falling out with California Pacific at this point, and they basically stopped paying me. I went to Sierra for *Ultima II*. They promised me a box with a cloth map. Most of my competition back then was arcade-game ripoffs that came out in Ziploc bags about once a month, and nobody cared much about them.

Online

Origin Systems • Windows 95

Mine was one of the only boxed games in the industry at the time. The *Ultima* games are still the only ones with cloth maps. The publishers don't like these maps because they're expensive to produce. After *Ultima II*, I said 'Gee whiz, the code for this was kinda clunky.' It was the first assembly code I'd ever done, so I started *Ultima III*. So you can see a pattern emerging here. All these games were learning experiences for me. I was rewriting games, starting over from scratch. It was really an accident, but I still do it to this day. I really believe that it's what's helped make the *Ultima* series so popular. Each one was dramatically improved over its predecessor. So *Ultima III* was the first product Origin produced back in 1983. After I had my own company, I actually started receiving letters sent to me personally."

Well, today, one would imagine that he probably needs a full time assistant to filter letters sent to him personally. But methinks Lord British is most likely master of his mail (not to mention his plate).

Master the possibilities

Ultima Online is perhaps the most awaited event in the history of the genre. Thousands have signed up for the beta test (which will hopefully have been launched prior to your reading of this). And why? Because finally technology has (almost) caught up with the goal of the designers, enabling the development of a product that adds a myriad of dimensions to the genre; because the idea of massively-multiplayer gaming has *always* been intriguing to us; but mostly, and most *simply*, because it's *Ultima*.

A few steps short of grand scale multiplayer virtual reality equipment at a reasonable cost, *UO* still offers a world that completely outclasses the competition. What competition? Well, we can predominantly point to *Meridian 59*, which has set the stage for the *type* of game we'll see in *Ultima*, but which certainly has not enjoyed the wealth of resources available at Origin to bring to fruition the kind of depth we might expect.

Said Garriot, "Even from the start, the *Ultima*s were designed to be not only great adventures, but a complete living, breathing world where one could live out an alternative life in all the detail we could possibly simulate." In the online version, we will see just that – total immersion in a world whose parameters for limitlessness far exceed those that are limiting. It might be hard for some to synthesize the concepts surrounding large-scale persistent worlds. In general, graphic multiplayer experiences consist of a brief connection for the purpose of battle, as in *Command & Conquer* or *Diablo*. Certainly MUD players know of diversity much greater than that. With respect to the endless possibilities here, Garriot has known people to ask, "So, you mean if I want to be a baker…I can go get apples and cut them up and buy and mix some flour and put the apples in it and put it in the oven and bake a pie and sell that pie to other players?" Yep. The hapless questioner thinks. "Wow! So, you mean if I want to be a armorer, I can mine ore and process it and forge it into metal and make swords or helmets or daggers and set up shop and sell them to other players?" Yep. "Cooool! Soooo…you mean if I want to be a prostitute…" Uh, no. This is where they draw the line. No lewd behavior is allowed (at least not in the towns).

Logistics and fuzzy dice

Ultima Online proposes the categorical experience in online multiplayer gaming – beginning with a Britannia larger than we've ever seen. The now-familiar map comprises more than 189 million square feet of virtual surface, over ten times the normal size, with the underworld adding area approximately the size of all of *Ultima 6*. (Speaking of which, the look and interface of the game are very reminiscent of *Ultima VI*, since its engine is the basis of the multiplayer game.) It would take ten hours to traverse the entire main continent (less if sailing or riding a llama). Collectors can expect to add yet another gorgeous cloth map to their cache.

Your character may start in any one of five mainland cities: Britain, Yew, Trinsic, Vesper or Minoc. When you create a character (and you may save five at a time), you are given the opportunity for limited physical customization (choice of organ size and eyebrow configuration unavailable), after which you will assign a certain number of points to different skills. This is a skill-based rather than a level-based game, which will generate more than a modicum of fairness when it comes to character balancing. In level-based games, whoever plays 100 hours per week will automatically outclass *forever* those who play, say, five hours (level 50+ *Diablo* warriors, this means you). In the skill-based system, you assign points to skills that would benefit whatever role you imagine, and then just act out the part. As long as you keep working on a specific type of skill, your ability in that skill will improve as you

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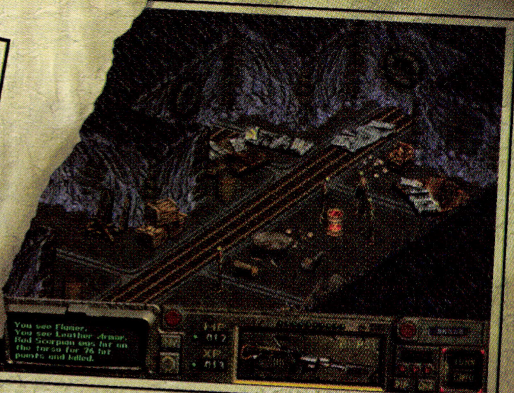
You see Flower.
You see Leather Armor.
Rad Scorpion was hit on the torso for 76 hit points and killed.
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XP
013

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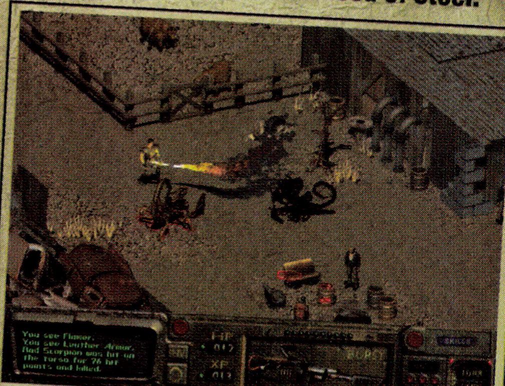
You see Flower.
You see Leather Armor.
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Fallout™

A POST NUCLEAR ROLE PLAYING GAME

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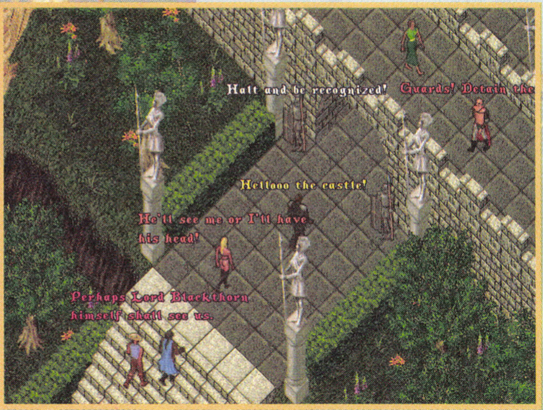
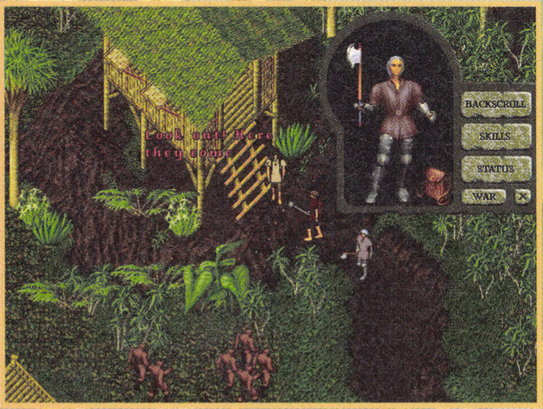
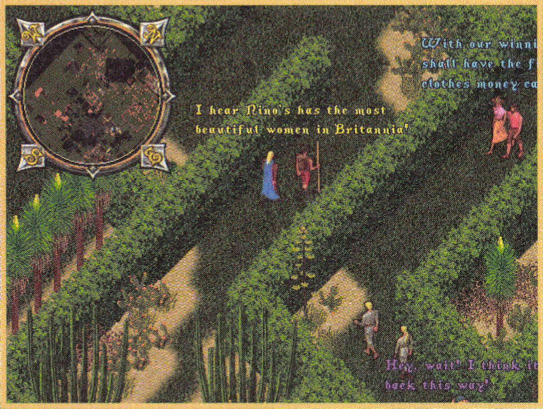

Halt and be recognized!
Guards! Detain the
Hellooo the castle!
He'll see me or I'll have his head!
Perhaps Lord Blackthorn himself shall see us.

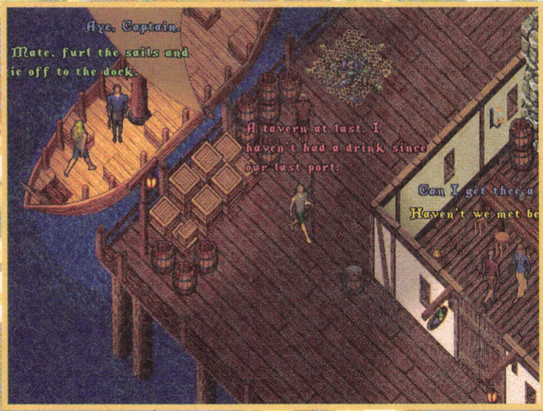
Blackthorne's Castle; nevermind that man behind the curtain



Invasion or croquet? You decide



Sunday in the labyrinth with George



Multimall online

progress in the game. This allows you to pursue any career you desire. Skills you have that you *don't* exercise will atrophy over time. It then becomes virtually impossible for any one character to have godlike strength in every skill, allowing for a more realistic balance of assets among characters.

Skills are acquired through training, practice or observation. Some, like combat, can be learned and improved through trial and error ("Uhhhhh...oh...I see, you use the *pointy* end to hit with."); something like forensics, however, if not already possessed, can *never* be learned without specific training ("I keep looking at that corpse and *looking* at it...and nothing happens...").

Although the crux of the game will lie in social interaction and group dynamics, there are certainly quests involved. In fact, a "grand quest" exists within the fabric of the game, unannounced and undocumented. As the world expands, players will find clues and hear information about something darker operating in the background; something that begs solution, but that, according to producer Starr Long, will probably never really be solved (until it's almost time for *Ultima Online II* to ship).

The AI here is more sophisticated than any we're used to, as NPC's remember the last ten people they talk to and the *top* ten people they've ever talked to (top ten being a measure of one's fame or notoriety). They will thus be able to give players information about one another in a very realistic way. Lord British himself is said to have been fooled by an NPC for more than a couple of minutes, believing that he was talking to at tester from his QC department. They will come and go, assuming various activities and shopkeeper roles vacated by players when they log off.

The true reality (or should we say true *virtual* reality) lies in the fact that one will not only *play* in the *Ultima* world – one will *live* here. Obviously, the flow of most games can be pre-planned by the designer: quest, quest, quest, cut-scene, quest, quest, quest, cut-scene, duck, duck, duck, GOOSE, finale. That is not possible in this case. What happens here will depend entirely upon the land's inhabitants and what they do with the raw material. Items, creatures, real estate and more are mere grains in what they're calling the ultimate sandbox of online gaming. With this type of built-in flexibility, the hope is that you will create an experience so real, so addicting, that you may never stop playing....

Death becomes us

Given the proclivity of P-Killers ("player killers," in *Diablo*-speak), one should probably expect to die at least a couple of times during the course of the game. Designers provide a death-model that is a bit out of the ordinary, but should prove interesting. When you are killed, you rise from your corpse as a ghost. Your inventory stays with the carcass, which remains where you died for several real days (presumably decaying nicely). If you are alone, it is probable that bands of thieves or animals will loot your corpse, but hopefully you have a social circle to protect your items until miraculous resurrection occurs. Several resurrection possibilities exist: Either approach a shrine for divine resurrection, or any city healer will resurrect you for free. Then you will be able to approach your rotting corpse to see what might be left. One of the designers with a cannibal fixation (the Sweeny Todd of Origin) insisted that since one can harvest livestock for food, that human carcasses should also be available for consumption, his justification being that since we may have Beef Pie, and Lamb Pie, we should also be able to have Pie of Fred. He was outvoted (as were the necrophilia lobbyists). Some have suggested that it may serve adventuring parties well to *keep* a ghost among them. Ghosts are neither seen, heard, able to carry items nor communicate (unless poltergeisting becomes implemented), but they *can* walk through dynamic objects (such as doors) without detection. Ghosting might indeed provide quite a valuable spy. How to receive information? Players will use either a seance spell, or be creative in other ways.

What is *not* possible is to avoid death by logging off. Logging off safely can only occur in an inn or a campsite. Those who log off elsewhere (or crash? Nah) will have their character remain alive for five additional minutes. In combat? Too bad.

Long and Garriot, having beaten the UO team into sumission, smile warmly

Let's misbehave

The usual bevy of monsters in the underworld will exist, but even more important than being wary of *them* will be to watch your back among the player-citizens of Britannia. Combat may never be more than a barstool away. Player assault and mugging is banned in town as are nudity, racism, sexism, baptism and Shirley Chisholm, but NPC guards act as the Britannia police, and will squelch poor behavior in town. And for your censoring enjoyment, a language filter is provided that will eliminate most offensive language or you may modify it to add any additional things you prefer not to encounter (like Barney songs). Designers decided to allow modification of the filter when it became apparent how many possibilities can exist between the F and the K.

Should you really wish to misbehave (and why not? it's fun), the outlands are *not* monitored by guards and hence you may ambush as many as you like. You can even take over a castle and start your own nudist colony or questionable business.

Good news! Hackers *will* be able to hack their characters, pump up stats, the works! Bad news: Hacked characters are altered back to their original state the minute they hit the server. Good news! Hackers can *try* to hack into the server! Bad news: If successful, they will be removed and forever banned from the game. Once you sign up with the online service, you enter into a contract with the company that you will *not* prove harmful to amity. You break it? Yourrrrrr'e outta there.

Getting crowded? They've gotcha covered

The world will hold approximately 3000 characters at any given time. Although it's hard to predict the success of this enterprise, it is certainly possible that more than 3000 will appear at once. Then what? A queue? Of *course* not. Cleverly woven into the fiction is the following: When the Avatar defeated Mondain, destroying the sacred Gem of Immortality, the planet was "still bound to the jewel's magic, even as it lay shattered upon the floor of Mondain's castle…In each shattered rift of the jewel dwelled a perfect likeness of Sosaria…" Yep – as many parallel worlds as they need. In the blink of an eye (and 28 or so servers later) another Britannia can exist – a resourceful solution to a sticky problem. But are two enough? Are six too many? Only sales will tell.

"But my friends are on Britannia A and I'm on Britannia B," you whine. No problem. At a particular time of day, the moongates will become portals between the worlds, allowing free passage, pioneering and escape for claustrophobic guilds and exiles.

We can look toward this endeavor with great anticipation, as it is likely to change the face of online role-playing forever. The texture of the environment after its habitation is impossible to predict. It will become a world as dynamic as our own. Origin's slogan: "We create worlds." Now, they *really* do.

Guilds

A Guild is a user created club or organization in support of *Ultima Online* (though not sanctioned or commissioned by Origin). Believe it or not, there are already over 300 formed guilds with mission statements and alliances associated with *Ultima Online*. Here is a just a tiny sliver of what to expect:

Britannian Thespian League- Bring your resume and glossies

Michael Jackson and the Beastial Zookeepers- Must be a zookeeper with a choice of species, and a single glove

The Cow Killers- Do you want to destroy cattle? If the answer is yes, join today

The Cult of the Monkey Spanker- "From hence forth, as long as there are monkeys, there will be spankings." –*The Great Monkey Spanker* 'nuf said?

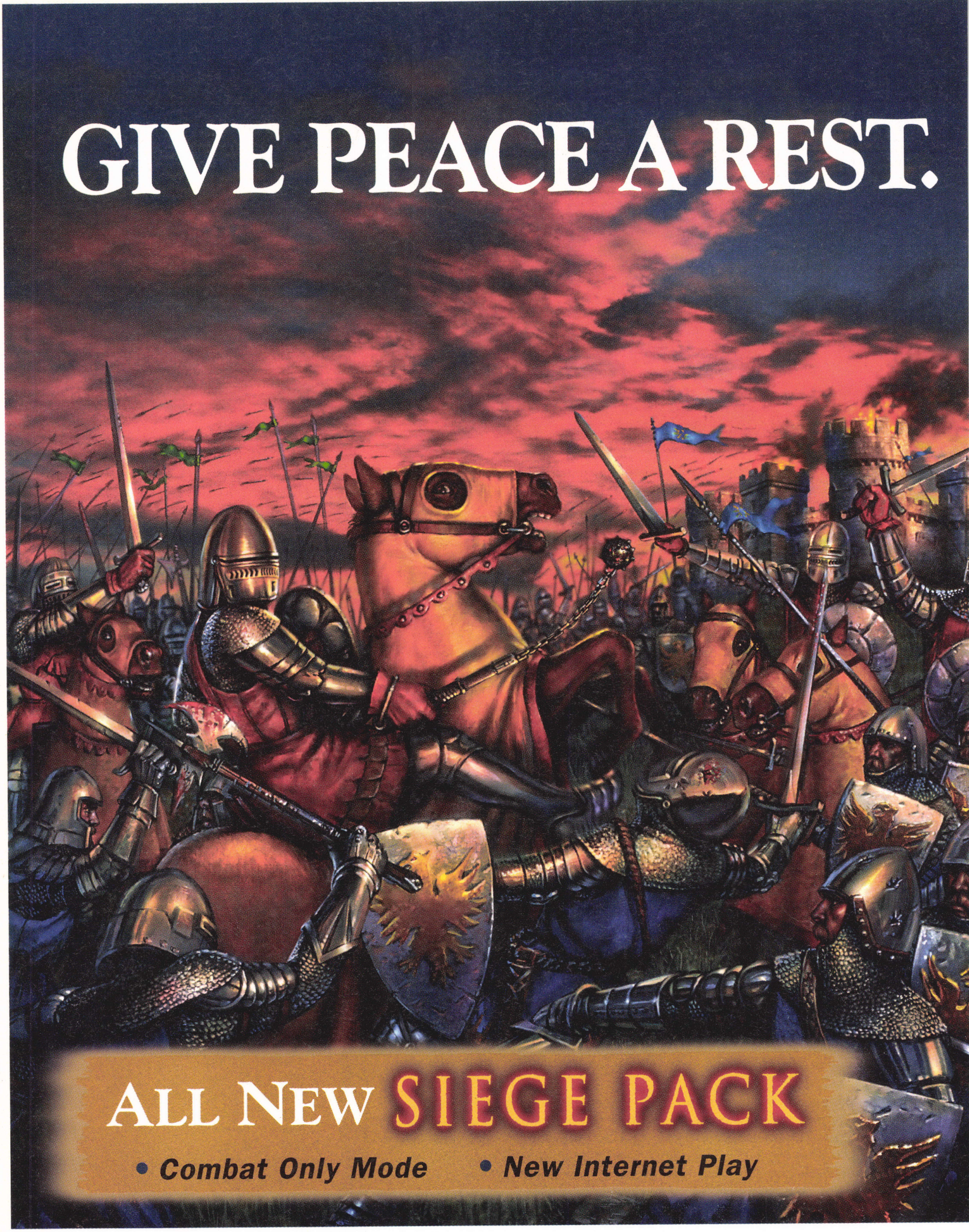
Skills

Alchemy
Anatomy
Animal Lore
Appraise
Arms Lore
Begging
Blacksmith
Calm
Camping
Carpentry
Cooking
Detect Hidden
Entice
Evaluate
Fishing
Fletcher/Bowyer
Forensics
Healing
Hide
Incite
Inscribe
Lockpicking
Mapmaking
Play
Poisoning
Tame Animal
Tailor
Taste
Tinker
Vet

Spells

Listed below are syllables a mage utters to accomplish spells. These are syllables of an ancient language, which bind and release etheric energy.

An -	Negate or dispel
Bet -	Small
Corp -	Death
Des -	Lower or down
Ex -	Freedom
Flam -	Flame
Grav -	Field
Hur -	Wind
In -	Make, create or cause
Jux -	Danger, trap or harm
Nox -	Poison
Ort-	Magic
Por -	Move or movement
Quas -	Illusion
Rel -	Change
Sanct -	Protect or protection
Tym -	Time
Uus -	Raise or up
Vas -	Great
Wis -	Know or knowledge
Xen -	Creature
Ylem -	Matter
Zu -	Sleep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Impressions

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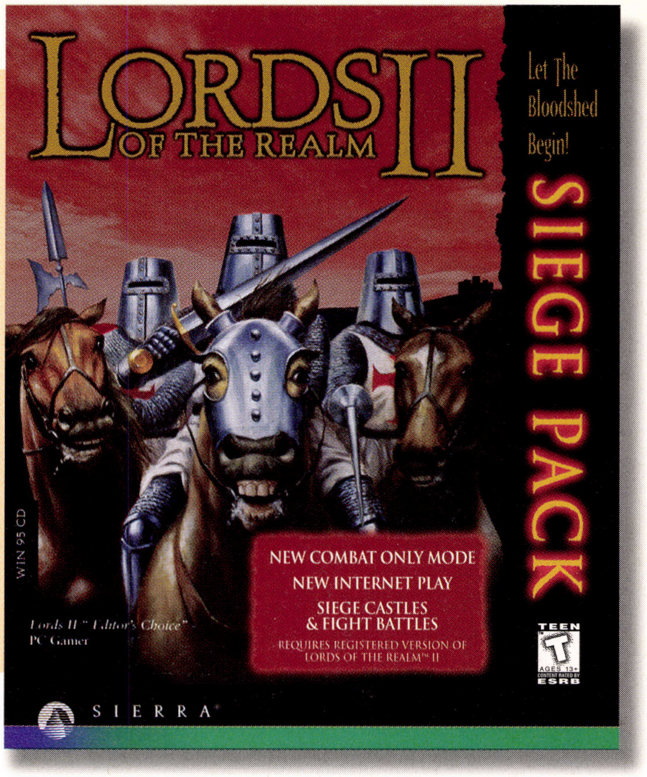
Enemy hosts await you for head-to-head combat on the Internet. Plus, new castles, battle maps and scenarios are ready to take you to the next level – putting you one bloodstained step closer to the English throne.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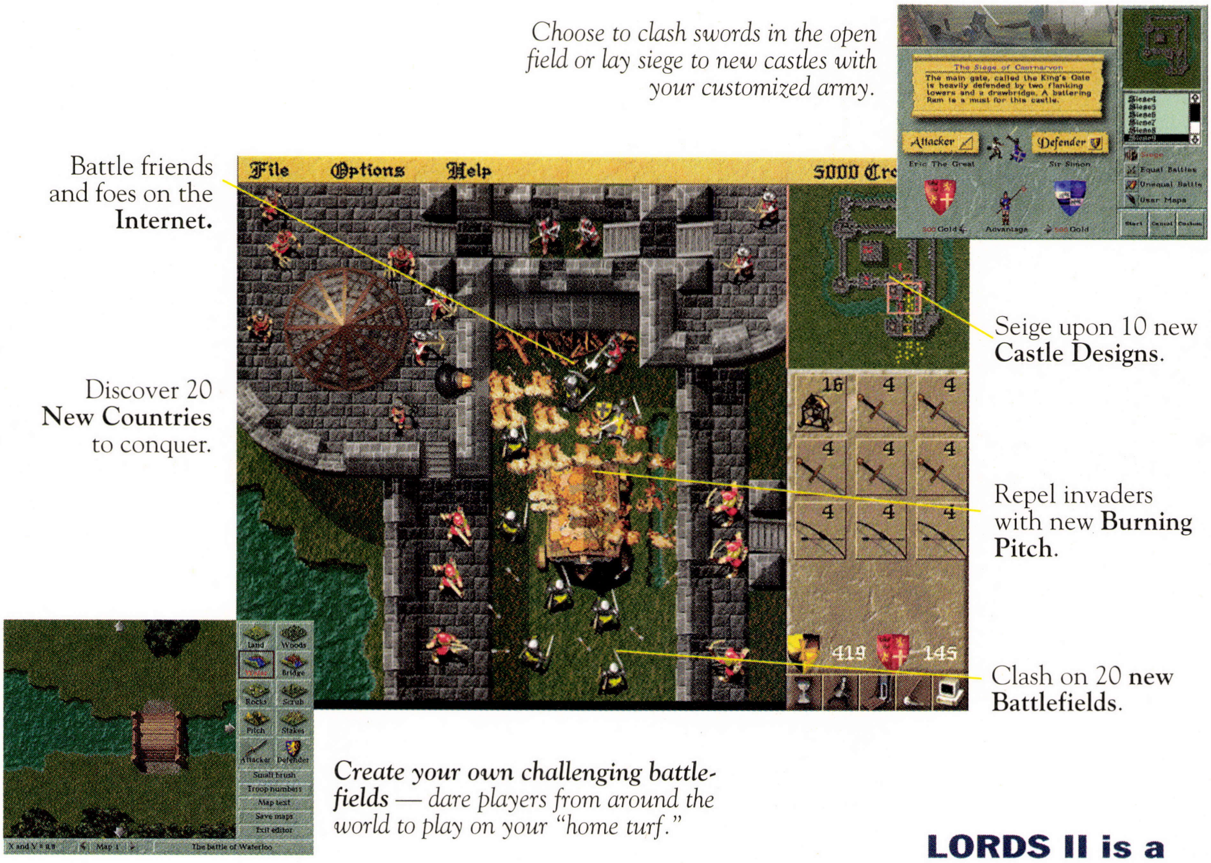
Let The Bloodshed Begin!
SIEGE PACK
WIN 95 CD
Lords II™ Editor's Choice" - PC Gamer
NEW COMBAT ONLY MODE
NEW INTERNET PLAY
SIEGE CASTLES & FIGHT BATTLES
REQUIRES REGISTERED VERSION OF LORDS OF THE REALM™ II
TEEN
AGES 13+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
SIERRA


File
Options
Help
5000 Cro
Attacker
Defender
Eric The Great
Sir Simon
500 Gold
Advantage
500 Gold
Siege4
Siege5
Siege6
Siege7
Siege8
Siege9
Siege
Equal Battles
Unequal Battle
User Maps
Start
Cancel
Custom
Land
Woods
Bridge
Rocks
Scrub
Pitch
Stakes
Attacker
Defender
Small brush
Troop numbers
Map text
Save maps
Exit editor
Map 1
The battle of Waterloo
419
145

The Siege of Caernarvon

The main gate, called the King's Gate is heavily defended by two flanking towers and a drawbridge. A battering Ram is a must for this castle.

Choose to clash swords in the open field or lay siege to new castles with your customized army.

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LORDS II is a

CG RATED ★★★★

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Coming this fall! Lords of Magic™

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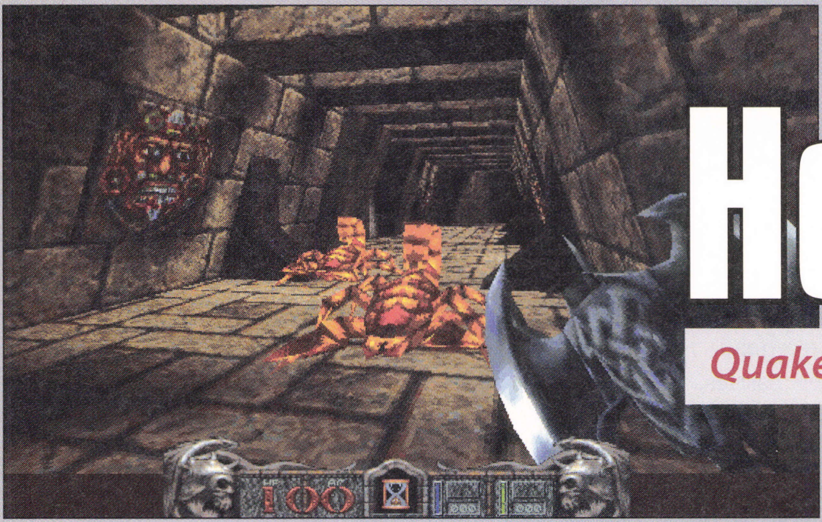


These Scorpions are a bit larger than average

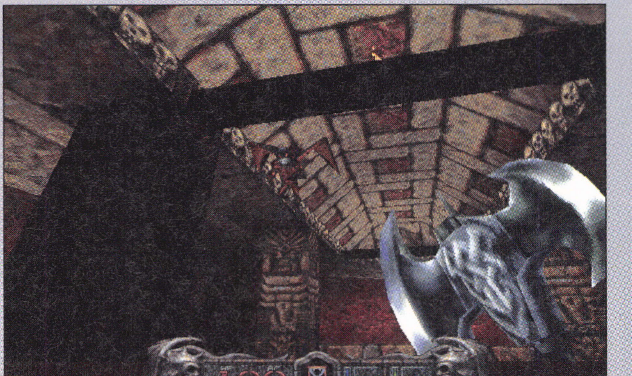
Hexen II

Quake gets medieval on your PC

Over the past few years, Raven Software has established a strong reputation in the gaming industry. The company isn't known for great leaps in technology, or for games that push the envelope of genres, but rather for its skill at improving existing games. Raven's most commercially successful efforts, *Heretic* and *Hexen*, followed directly in the footsteps of id Software's *Doom* engine. Raven's games are evolutionary rather than revolutionary; instead of showing the gamer something he's never been before, Raven takes existing designs and pushes them a step or two further, adding superior level design and a strong artistic vision in the process. Such is the case with *Hexen II*.

Whereas Heretic and Hexen were built upon the sturdy foundation of the *Doom* engine, *Hexen II* makes use of the *Quake* engine. The trick, as always, will be to add enough novelty to avoid "been there, done that" syndrome. All the details haven't been ironed out yet, but at this stage it looks like *Hexen II* will bring more than enough to the table to satisfy most gamers' hunger for action.

The first difference between *Quake* and *Hexen II* lies in theme. While *Quake* flirted with medieval themes, it ultimately discarded them in favor of the more familiar, high-tech weapons and environments of *Doom*. This uneven mishmash of sci-fi, fantasy and horror detracted somewhat from the game, but the sheer power of the engine was enough to squelch such esoteric complaints. Now that gamers are more familiar with the *Quake* engine, however, they'll expect more. *Hexen II* delivers a more unified environment than *Quake*; all the monsters, from spell-casting Skull Wizards to scuttling Giant Scorpions, fit firmly into the fantasy mold. Weapons range from swords and axes to scythes and ninja-style incendiaries. Each can be magically enhanced by the Tome of Power, a much-beloved artifact from *Heretic* that's now making a comeback.



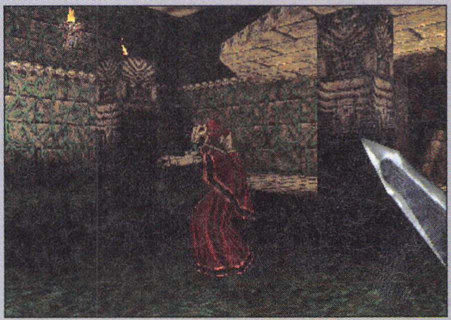
Hexen II retains Quake's true 3D functionality. Notice the Imp hovering in the rafters

Within this fantasy theme there's still lots of variety. *Hexen II* retains the "hub" level design of *Hexen*, which allows players to travel back and forth between a central hub (*i.e.*, gateway level) and a number of dependent sub-levels. Each hub has a different visual theme: players will find themselves in medieval European, ancient Egyptian, and Roman-inspired locales, among others.

Another distinctive element of *Hexen II* is its character system. The game features four characters: Paladin, Crusader, Necromancer and Assassin. Each character class has its own set of weapons, its own physical attributes, and its own special abilities. These special abilities are new to *Hexen II*, and they're both powerful and distinctive. The Necromancer, for example, is able to collect energy spheres representing the souls of his victims. These spheres randomly translate into health or mana for the Necromancer. Sometimes these spheres even re-animate the bodies they once inhabited, creating zombie-like servants to temporarily protect the Necromancer.

Differences between character classes have been pushed a step further than in *Hexen*. Each character gains levels as he or she racks up kills, much like a character in a role-playing game. Level advancement brings enhanced character statistics and skills. While the player has no control over skill advancement or point allocation, this level system helps provide the feeling of a role-playing game within an action environment.

The Skull Wizard is one of Hexen II's deadly foes. Screenshots can't do his smooth animation justice



Level design and visual aesthetics are another area targeted for improvement. The game's textures and monsters all look great, and the levels, though incomplete, promise more interaction than *Quake*'s levels did. Monster animation uses twice as many frames as *Quake*, resulting in smoother, more realistic-looking polygonal enemies. And everywhere you'll find details that help bring the world to life: howling wind, swirling leaves, breaking glass… the list goes on.

Finally, *Hexen II* sees the addition of a character inventory, and the ability to fly. These two additions were present in the original *Hexen*, but didn't show up in *Quake*. Both should significantly enhance the game experience, both in single-player and Deathmatch.

Barring any unforeseen gaffes, *Hexen II* should be a worthy successor to *Quake*. It offers enough innovation to distance itself from *Quake*, but retains that title's fast-paced action and unmatched 3D environments. We're looking forward to it. *–Joe Grant Bell*

Hexen II • Activision • DOS, Windows 95

~~heroin~~

S & M

~~unfiltered cigs~~

~~binge drinking~~

~~creamed corn~~

~~one night stands~~

hell, what's left?

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FOR TOO LONG
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The Drive to Survival!
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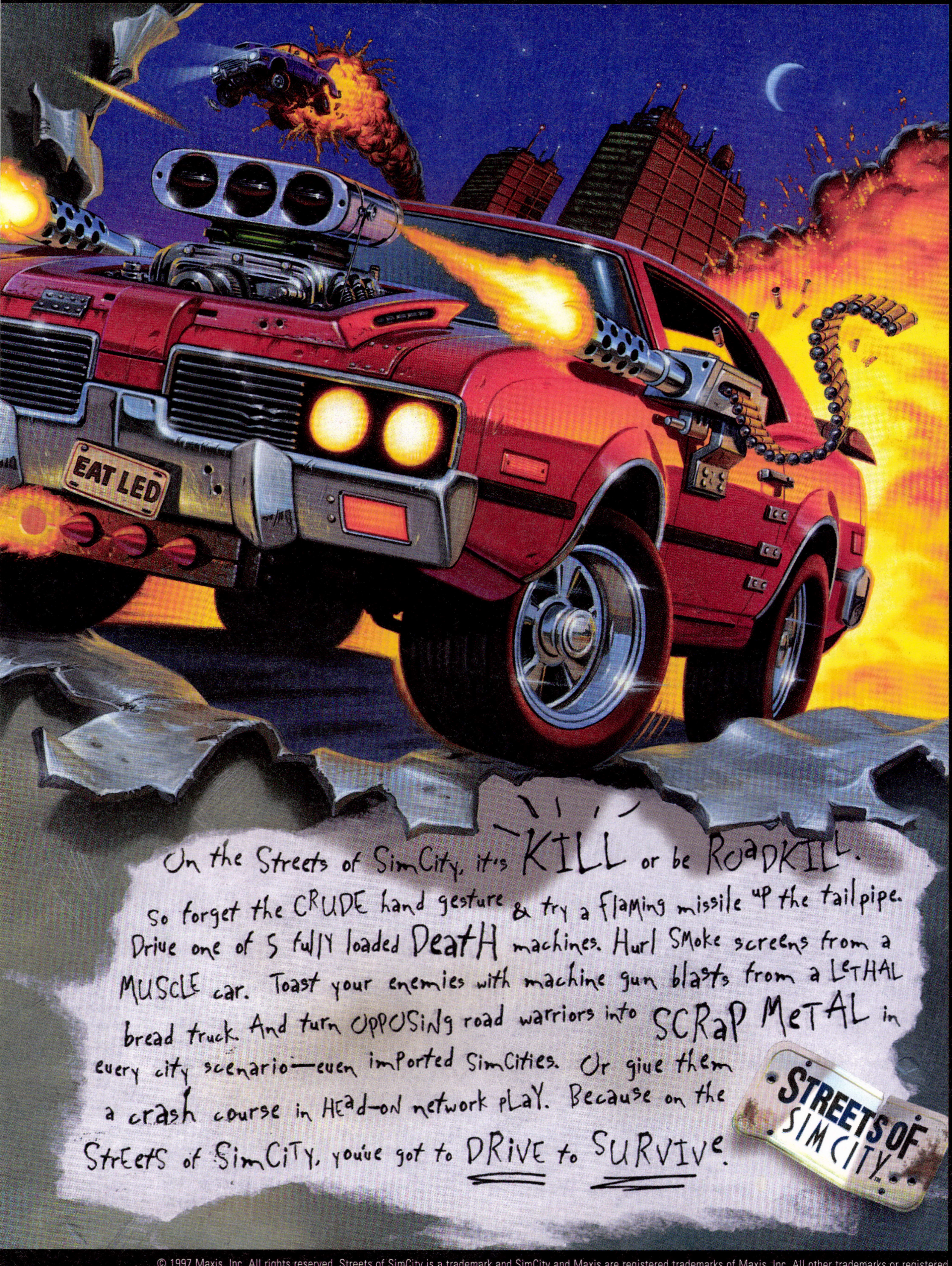

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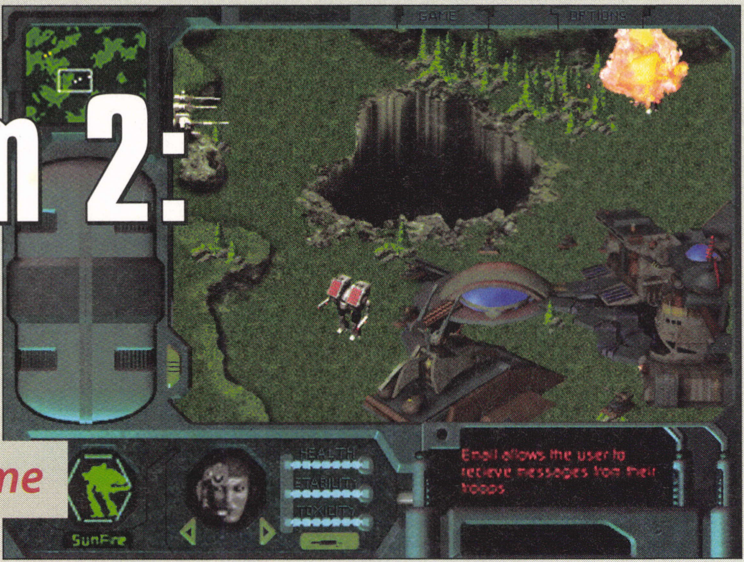
An early look at the Cyberstorm2 interface; notice how there are touches of the original (especially in the haunting look of the Bioderm) and visuals unique to the sequel ▶

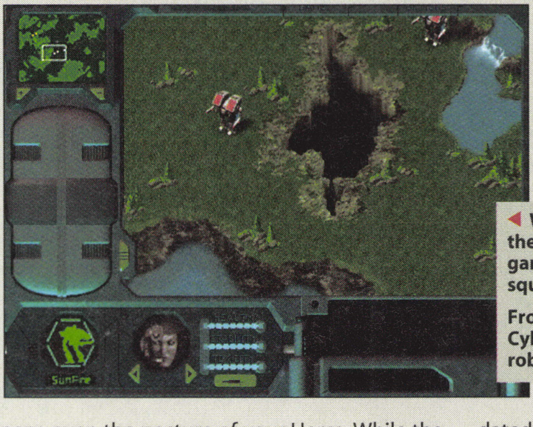


Email allows the user to recieve messages from their troops

Cyberstorm 2: Corp Wars

Mech-marching into real-time

There's little doubt that battling robots is a favorite theme of computer gamers; from the technology you get to play with to the universes to play *in*, the "mecha" genre is a major one. While many of the games fall into the action/simulation category, there have been a few strategy titles as well, games that let you step to a higher level and command entire units of these walking robots. Last year Sierra put out its first game of this sort: *MissionForce: Cyberstorm*, set in the *EarthSiege* universe. A turn-based game, it let you build up a force of these Mechs (or Hercs, in *EarthSiege*-speak) and work through a variety of missions against the Cybrids. You built up pilots (called Bioderms), designed Hercs, and sent them into battles across a variety of terrain on hexagon-tiled maps. You controlled almost everything: shield facing, weapon selection, extra machinery, even the posture of your Hercs. While the game received some criticism, it achieved a following, with fans calling for more. Sierra is delivering it… although perhaps not in the form expected.



◀ **While the robots are similar, gone is the hexagon-based tile set of the first game; instead, this more natural-looking squares-based set will be used instead**

While set in the same universe, you won't be battling the Cybrid foes of other *EarthSiege* games. Instead, you're a military member of a corporation seeking to explore and exploit newly discovered planets. Despite (or perhaps because of) the Cybrids, commerce continues, and it does so in a violent fashion; other corporations are also questing after these new worlds, and it will be up to you to win them for your company through battle. Aside from the fact that you now fight other human forces, much of the spirit of *Cyberstorm 2* is the same, with one major and controversial difference: the game is now in real-time.

"Real-time! Why?!" has been the reaction we've most often heard, and one that Sierra is apparently familiar with. Says designer Graeme Bayless, "the very frank answer is that the best selling turn-based strategy game *ever* sold less than a quarter of a million copies [*Not true – MicroProse's Civilization II has sold over a million units. - ed*]. The best *non* turn-based strategy game sold a lot more. So it's clear to us that what the audience wants is the ability to have a little more action." Bayless says the action they are putting into *Cyberstorm 2* to be closer to that in *Diablo* than that in *Command & Conquer*; while in battle, you control no more than six to eight vehicles, and some of the functions on those vehicles have been automated (shield management, for example).

And vehicles is the proper term, as you can now command grav vehicles, tanks, Hercs, and a mixture of others. Each type has strengths and weaknesses you must take into account; grav vehicles are fast but fragile, tanks are tough but have trouble in rough terrain, and hercs mix the capabilities of the others. You still spend much of the game at your base, crafting and training Bioderms and designing, building, and repairing vehicles (the weapons have grown from 69 types to 177 in the working version, and there are now some 16 tech levels for each system).

At the combat level, maps are now square tiles (no more hexagons); says Bayless: "We've gone away from the hex-based visuals because of the fact that our potential customers – the action crowd – are to some extent intimidated by that kind of hexy nature of the terrain." While it presents a pseudo-iso-view like *Command & Conquer*, the terrain is more realistic, with features like multi-level hills, slopes, cliffs, roads, rivers, and bridges, all of which will affect the movement of vehicles depending on their types. The game's AI is also receiving quite a bit of attention; unless you are commanding a vehicle directly, the Bioderm of the vehicle will attempt to follow your orders (move, defend a point or area, engage, etc.), and depending on its various ratings it will act intelligently (although its idea of an intelligent action might be to run away).

From gun emplacements to flying craft, Cyberstorm 2 won't be just a walking robots game ▶

Bayless recognizes that there are fans of turn-based play, and the design of *Cyberstorm 2* apparently takes this into account; "There will be people who want to slow down the system to almost a standstill so that they can play the slow methodical game they want to play. This should give them almost a turn-based feel if that's what they want." How well the game will do in this year of real-time strategy games (35+ at last count, compared to 2-3 turn-based) remains to be seen, but gamers should get the chance to decide this Fall. *–Scott Udell*

Cyberstorm 2: Corp Wars • Sierra • Windows 95

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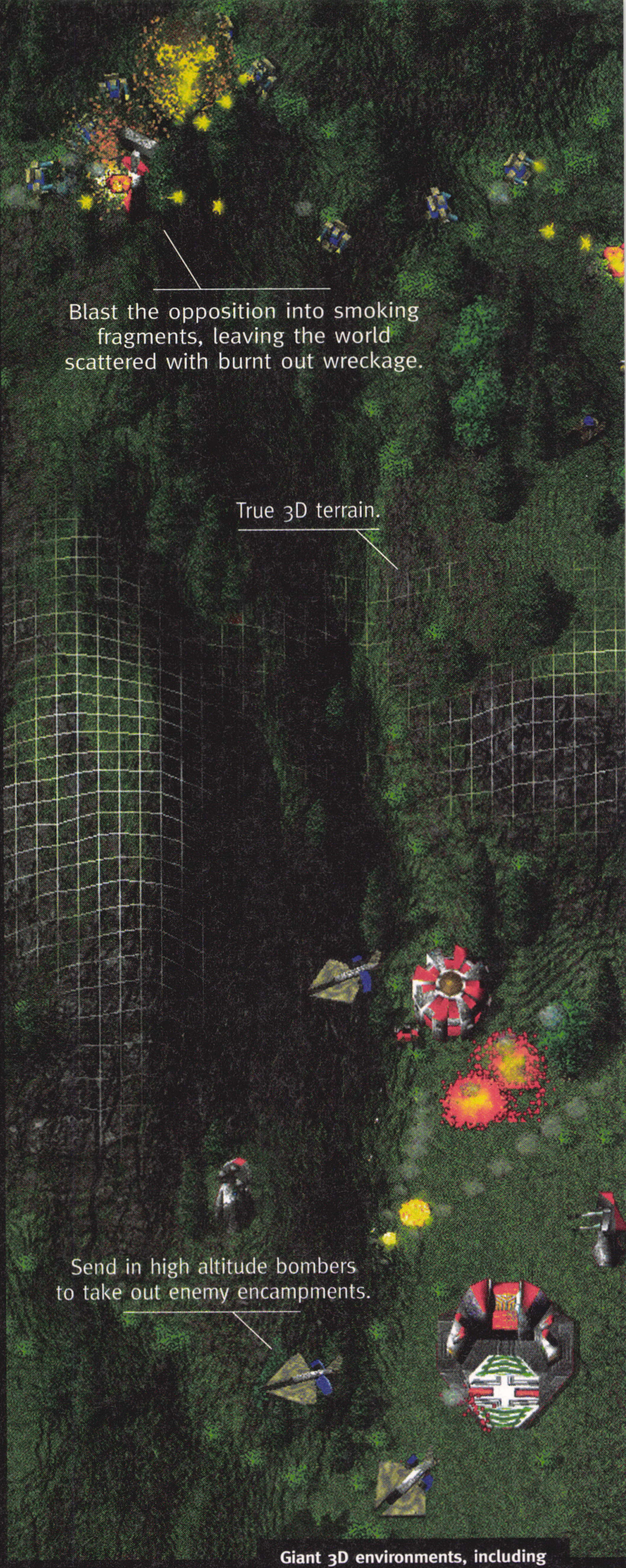
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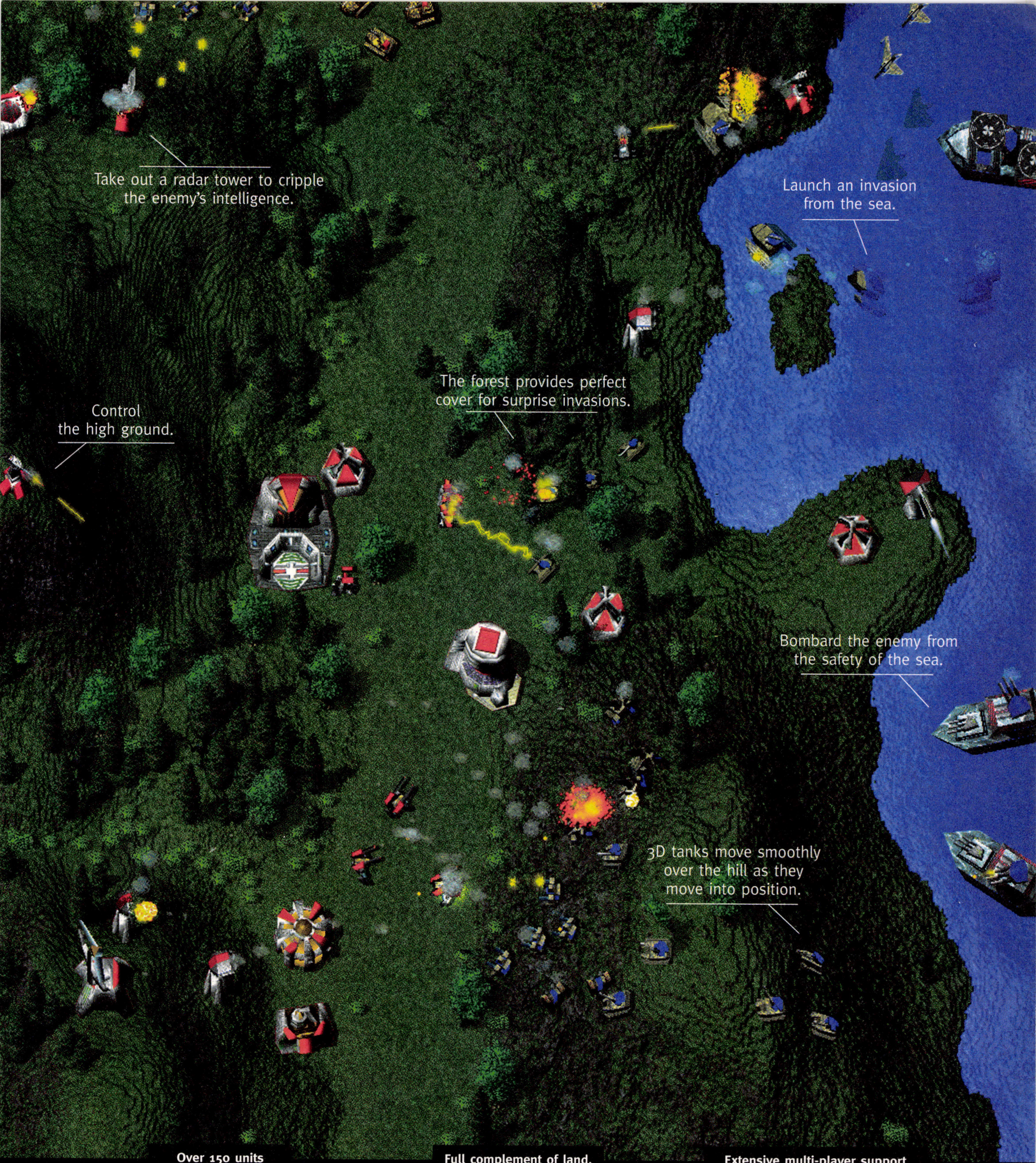
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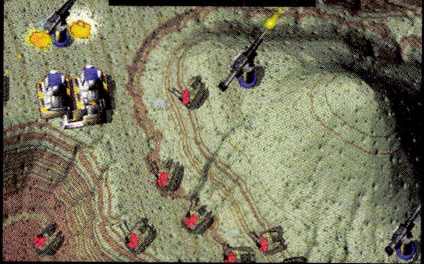
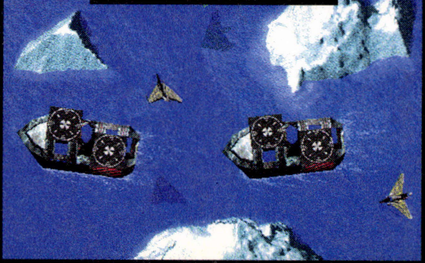
Bombard the enemy from the safety of the sea.
3D tanks move smoothly over the hill as they move into position.


Over 150 units and 50 missions.


Full complement of land, air and sea units.

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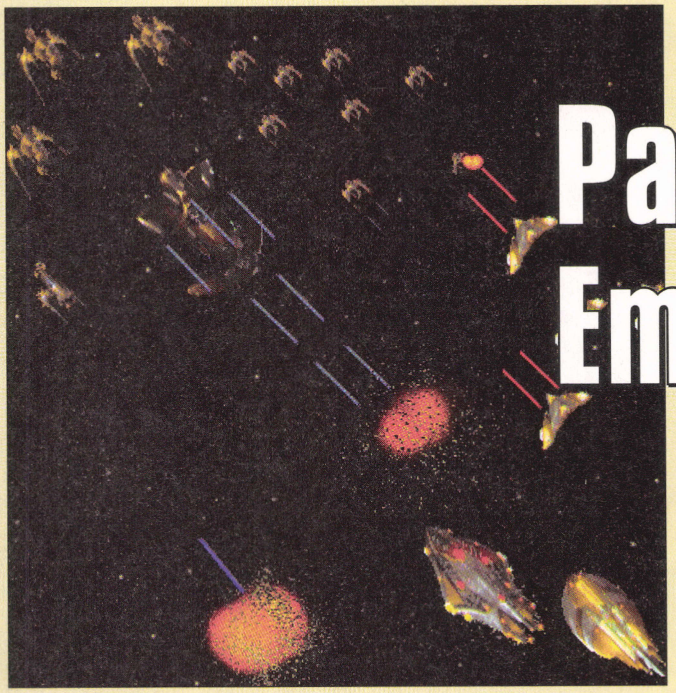
Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain

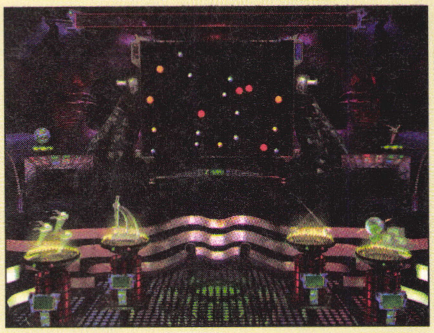
A new home and a new look for the highly anticipated space strategy game



◀ **Tactical ship combat is similar in gameplay to Command & Conquer or the upcoming Starcraft; while on a two-dimensional map, ships can pass over or under one another**

First previewed back in our September 1995 issue, the massive space empire builder *Pax Imperia 2* is finally going see the light of day at the galactic core, sporting a new publisher, a new look, and a modified title–*Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain*–intended to let people know that this isn't just a rehashing of the classic Mac game but an entirely reworked product that will, THQ hopes, appeal to a wide audience.

Originally scheduled for publication by Blizzard (the *Warcraft* and *Diablo* folks), some changes last year caused a shift. First off, developer Heliotrope Studios was purchased by THQ, a major force in the console game market that is only just getting into the PC world (*Pax Imperia* will be their first PC/Mac title). Blizzard was now in the awkward position of having the rights to a game that was being developed by a company that could, in the future, become a competitor. There was also talk at the time that Blizzard (or some within Blizzard) felt that the game as it stood was too complex, too detailed, and, because of that, not that much fun. Of course, "complex" and "detailed" were exactly what some gamers were looking forward to, so there was quite a bit of disappointment when the title dropped from Blizzard's release schedule. What we didn't know was that THQ had bought the rights to the game from Blizzard, and were now free to go about developing it as they saw fit.

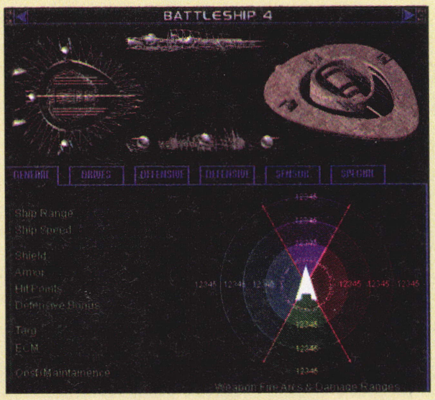


Just rattling off the features makes the *Eminent Domain* makeover sound just like the older *Pax 2* design (and a lot of other space empire games as well): up to 80 stars with as many as ten planets each, 16 preset races and the ability to design your own, research, ship design, colony management and production, diplomacy and trade, and, of course, combat. What set the original design apart from others, however, was the *amount* of detail in the game; so much detail and potential for micro-management that some referred to it as playing a spreadsheet instead of a game. While they want to keep the detail for gamers who want it, Heliotrope and THQ have reworked *Eminent Domain* to give it a better look and feel; Heliotrope President Andrew Sispoidis uses terms like "immersive" and "cinematic" to describe the game–he says they want gamers to feel like they are really acting the role of a galactic emperor (and not that classic RPG role of business schools, the accountant).

While the look of the game may have improved, the detail *behind* design has certainly *not* been thrown out (although some of it has been toned down; for example, instead of "thousands" of technologies to research you'll "only" have hundreds). Instead, complexity is both layered and supported by the AI in different areas, leaving gamers to focus on the part of the design that they want to. For example, you can either ignore research, set general goals, or get way down to the component level, directing every single project. Currently, though, there's probably no way for a single player to do it all (especially when multiple *Command & Conquer*-style tactical space battles start happening simultaneously), because the game is real time; while you're whiling away the hours in the research labs on Omega, you may be missing the battle at Tau Ceti and the uprising on Cignus. Yes, you'll get warnings of all events, but eventually too many things will be happening at once for you to manage, so delegation will become an important part of the game.

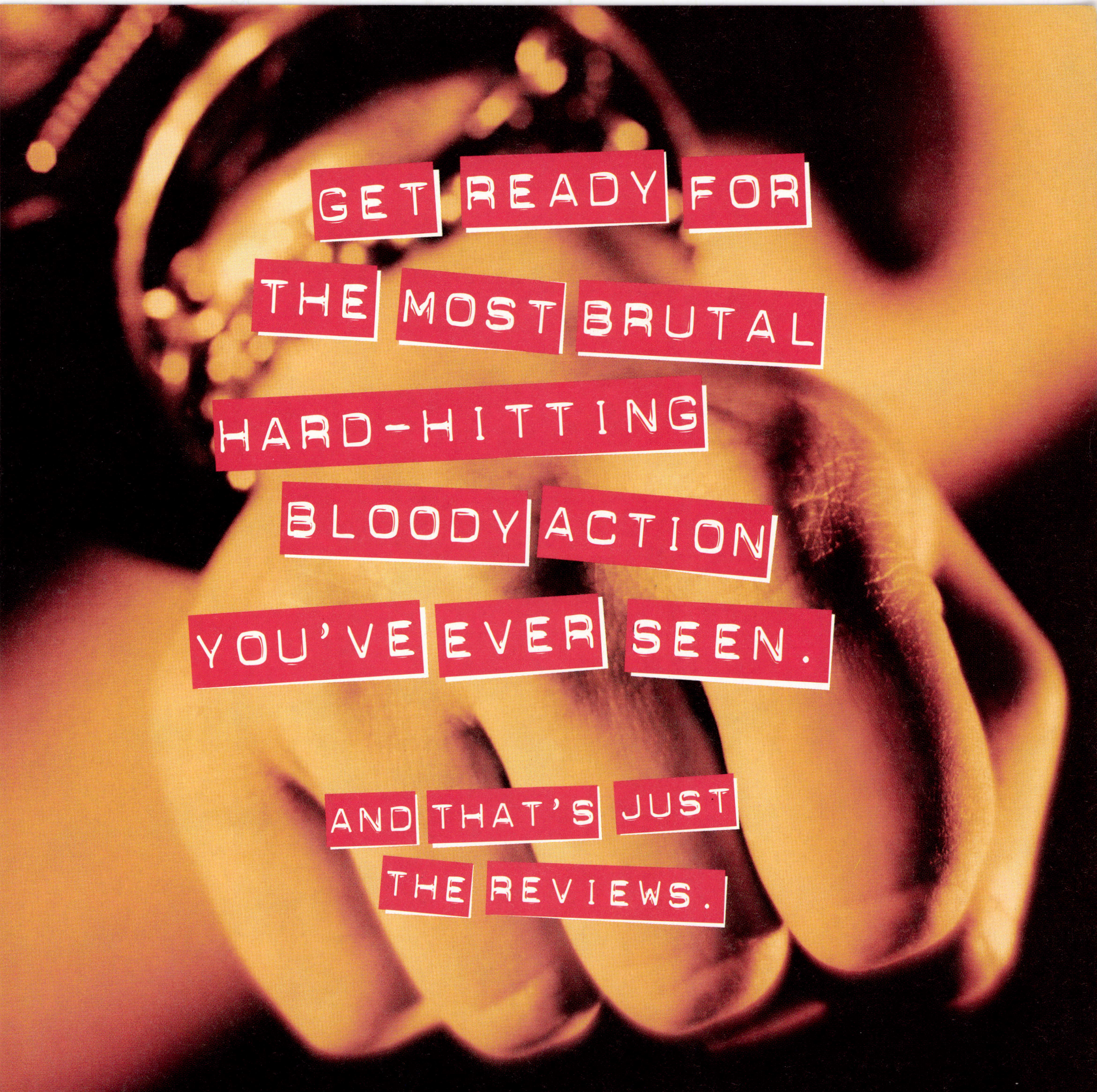
Ship design is still detailed, but the complexity the game was known for has been layered ▶

Preliminary version of the new main control screen: note the "holographic" access points for functions like research and ship design ▼



This said, though, Sispoidis did tell us that they are considering adding an optional turn-based mode (something that would enable them to also add play-by-e-mail capabilities). Gamers who care to voice their opinion on this or any other aspect of the game are encouraged to visit the *Pax Imperia* forum at the game's web site (www.paximperia.com), where everyone discussion of the game is an on-going event. The rest of use can wait patiently until the end of August, when the game is due to ship simultaneously for the Macintosh and Windows 95. *–Scott Udell*

Pax Imperia: Eminent Domain • *THQ • Windows 95, Macintosh*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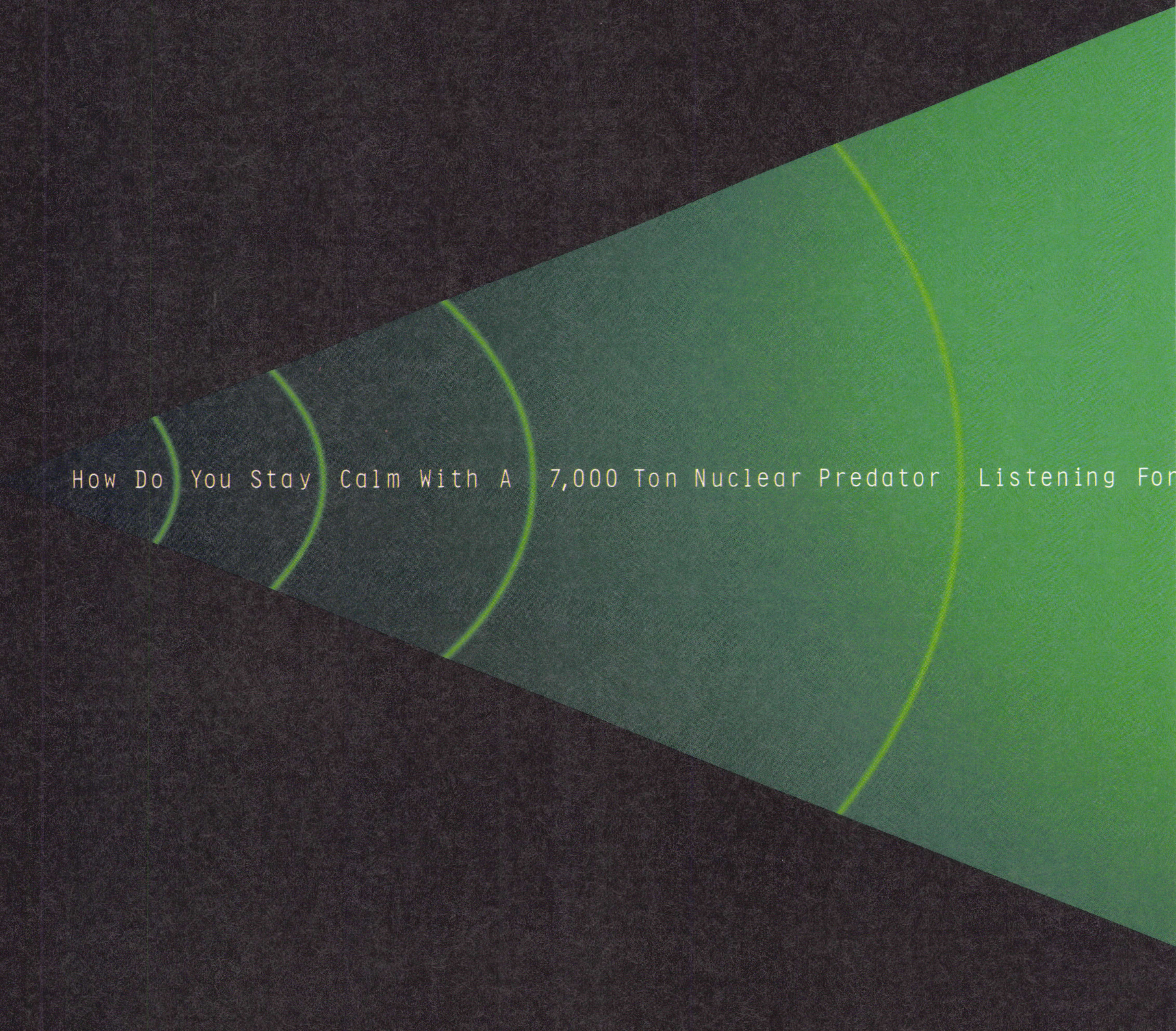
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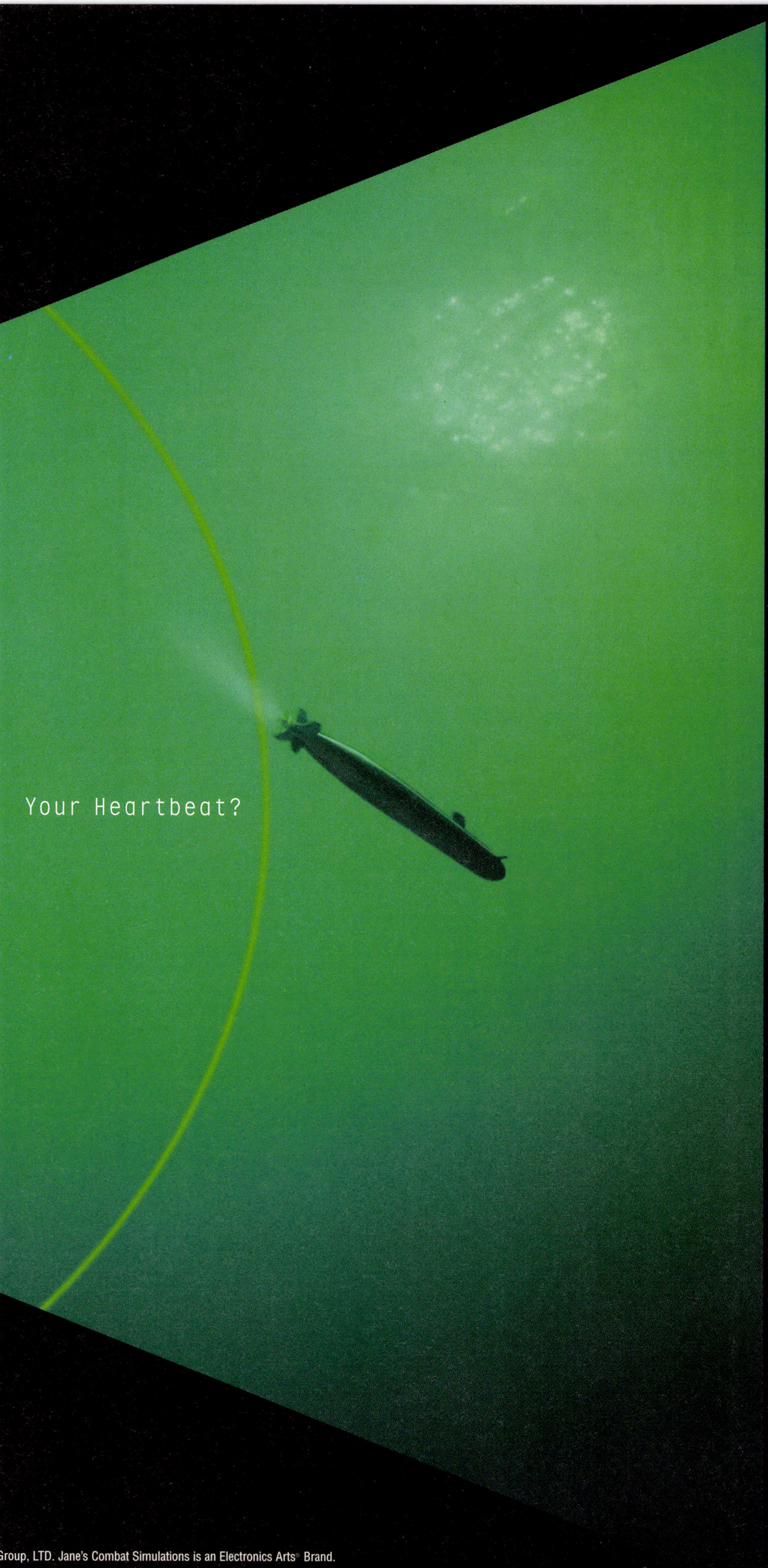

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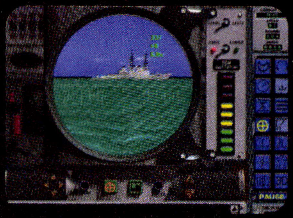

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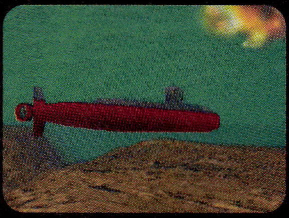

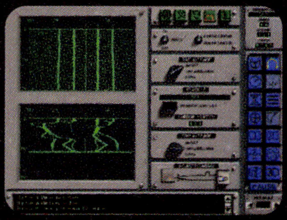

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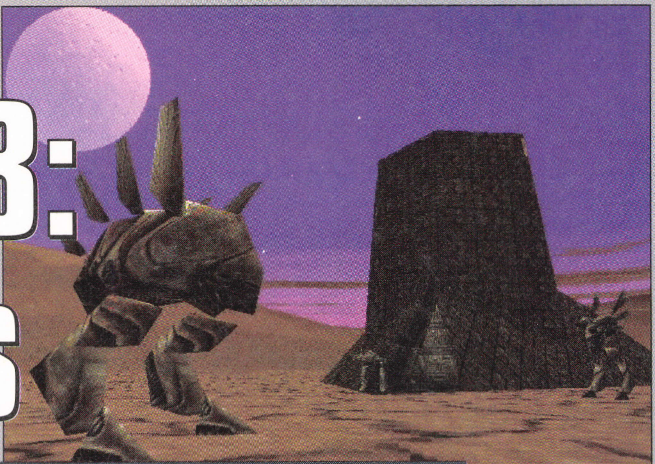
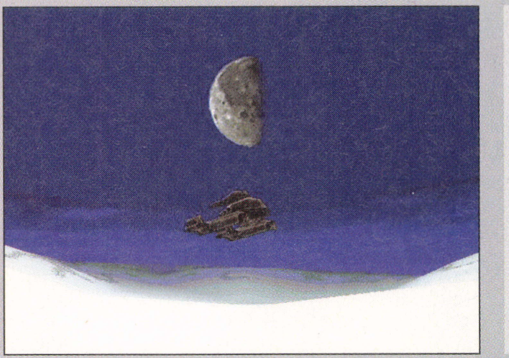


EarthSeige 3: Future Wars

New worlds and new technology for a dynamic sci-fi sim

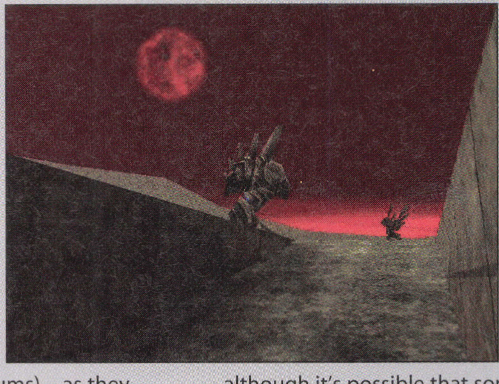
In the world of giant robot simulations, two different game universes have come to the fore: Sierra/Dynamix's *EarthSiege* series and Activision's *MechWarrior* games. While fans of the genre endlessly debate the merits of the two systems, no one can deny that the *MechWarrior* series has sold better. With that in mind, Dynamix has gone through a wholesale evaluation of what they did right in *EarthSiege 2* and have identified where they fell short, where they didn't do the things needed to fully capture the imagination of the mech-genre gamer. With *EarthSiege 3* (due to ship for the Holidays) they feel they have something that will do that and more.

One of the complaints gamers have had with the *EarthSiege* games to date is that they felt there was a lack of story, of atmosphere, to the universe being represented. While the *MechWarrior* titles have the whole FASA game universe to work from, Dynamix had to start from scratch, fiction-wise, and many felt the first games of the series showed this. For *EarthSiege 3* it should be different. Says Producer Ken Embery, "We're going to pay much more attention this time around to setting up the game and the personality of the game going in." The story posits a post-*EarthSiege 2* future where the Human-Cybrid conflict has expanded to engulf the entire solar system. Centuries of war have had little result, and both the Human and Cybrid cultures are showing signs of cracking. Add into this mixture the recent discovery of signs of alien visitation to certain worlds, bits of alien technology, and a hint at the grail of a spacefaring civilization: faster-than-light travel.



◀ The new engine provides seamless combat transitions, allowing combat to move smoothly from surface to underground and interior areas

In addition to "classic" walking robots EarthSiege 3 has tanks, hover vehicles, and flying craft ▼



Gamers will get to take on one of three mission tracks – Human, Cybrid, or Human Rebel (Martian miners battling against Terran Consortiums) – as they attempt to fight through the non-linear story line and discover the FTL secrets. While there will be approximately 45 canned missions, no play through the storyline will be identical because randomly generated missions (for either sub-plots or to help you generate finances) will be tossed in to the mix. The Human campaign will be the easiest, and the Human Rebel campaign the hardest.

Added to the walking robot Herc mix will be a variety of new but more traditional vehicles like tanks, aircraft and wheeled scouts, all of which players may get to control. Missions will be more detailed, more complex and will move seamlessly from area to area. For example, you may find yourself rushing to defend a Herc Bay, approaching the building from a distance, entering it and having to fight inside, all without jarring interruptions in the gameplay. You'll often command squads of Hercs and vehicles, with BioDerm pilots or Cybrid droids as your team-mates. As commander of a mission you'll have a "VR Command mode that enables the player to assume control of any vehicle in his squad during battle and direct the action with precise control, even if his own vehicle becomes disabled."

Aside from story and gameplay improvements, Dynamix feels their technology is truly a leap ahead. Says Embery, "Everything that we've seen in terms of articles, Internet demos, etc., makes us believe that the competition is shooting at *EarthSiege 2* technology and we're already beyond that. ... We feel that *EarthSiege 3* is the first step of putting Dynamix back in the forefront of 3D engine development; the technology that's inside this game is driving this product and six other products inside the company." The game will have full 3D accelerator support (for Rendition, 3Dfx, or generic Direct3D), multiplayer for at *least* eight players, maybe even (with the corporate connections provided by parent company CUC) play on battle.net. In future plans, the game will work under Windows NT and supports multi-processor machines. Mid-range (for now, 90MHz) Pentiums will probably meet minimum requirements, with better resolutions and detail levels available on more upscale machines, although it's possible that someone with a 60MHz Pentium will be able to run the game if they have a 3D card.

The design is ambitious, the technological components impressive, and the talent and experience of Dynamix undeniable; now we all will have to wait to see if the final product fights its way to the top of the herculean hill or ends up tripping over its (robotic) feet. *–Scott Udell*

EarthSiege 3: Future Wars • *Sierra* • *Windows 95, NT*

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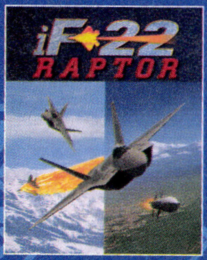

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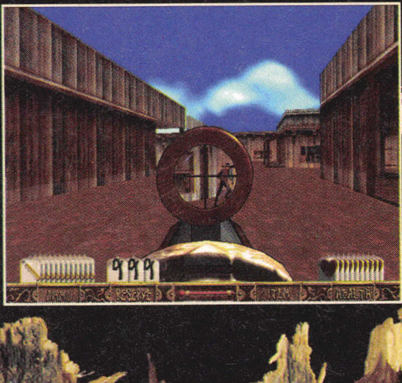

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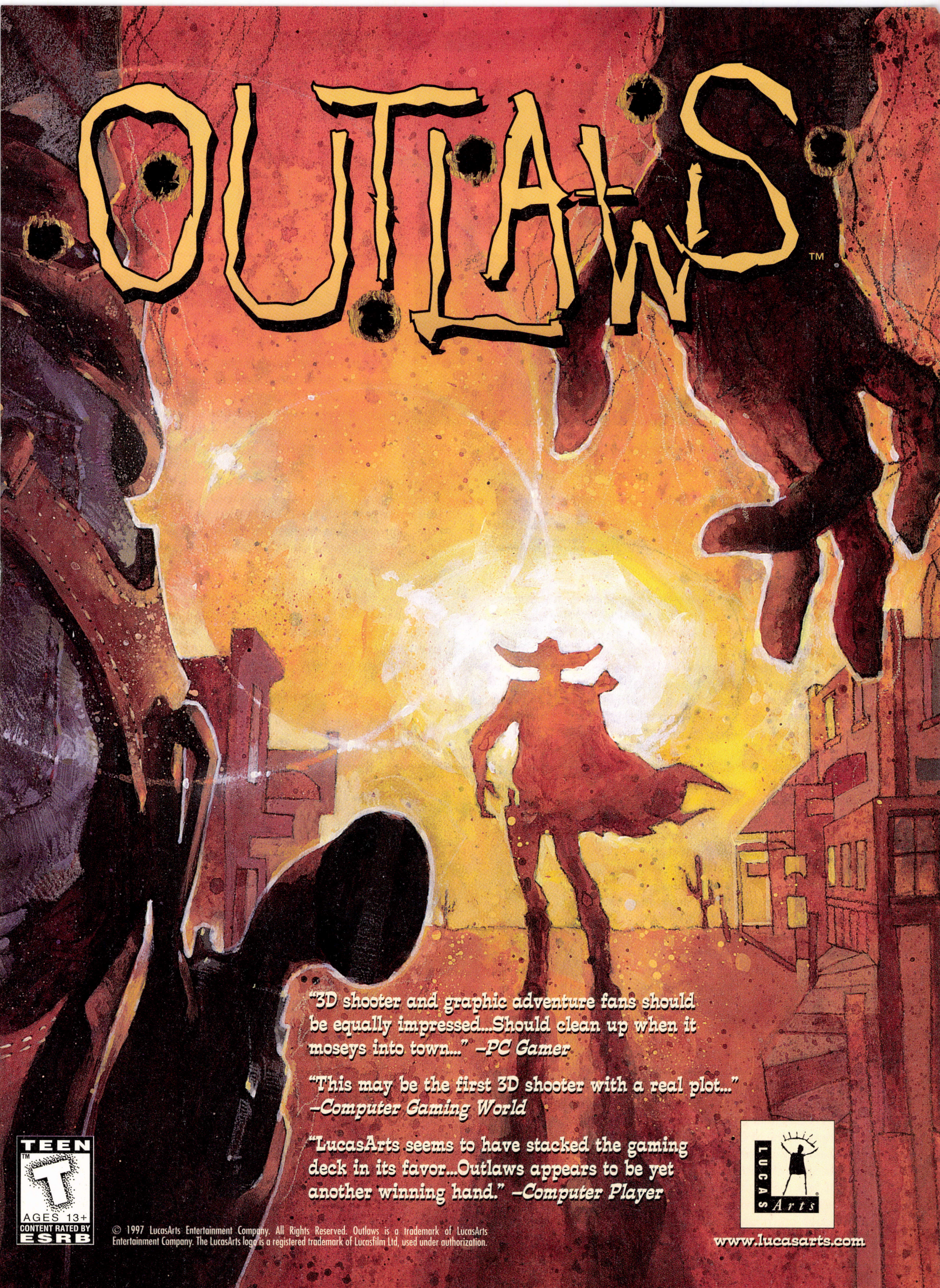

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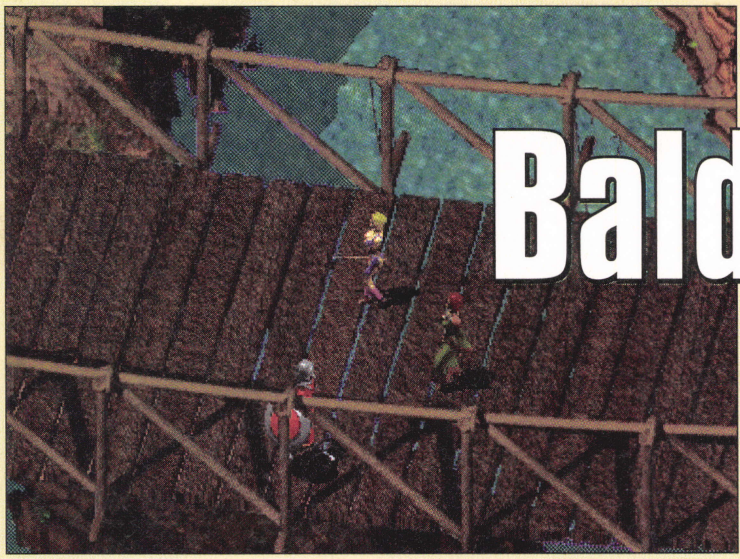
Baldur's Gate

AD&D tiptoes into real-time

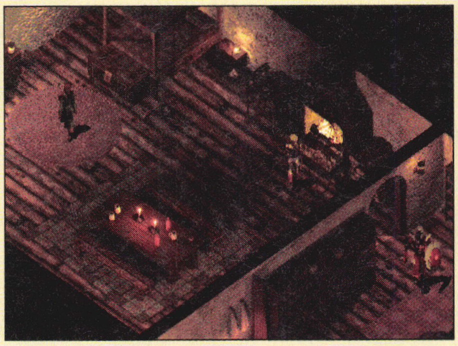


◀ **Baldur's bridge**

Bioware's Dr. Ray Muzyka (joint CEO and one of the big three docs of the corporation) is responsible for their *Forgotten Realms* division. He avidly expects their upcoming RPG, *Baldur's Gate*, to offer the best role-playing experience in an *AD&D* environment ever to hit the small screen.

Muzyka is no stranger to RPGs. He's played many, his favorites being *Wizardry*, *Wasteland*, *Ultima IV* and *V*, *Ultima Underworld*, *System Shock*, and *Betrayal at Krondor*; and he has tried to incorporate the best features of these into the design of *Baldur's Gate* (*Krondor* and *Wasteland* especially). He considers the most important factors to be a strong storyline and ease of gameplay.

"The basic story involves the regions around the cities of Baldur's Gate and Amn. These cities are embroiled in nefarious intrigue that endangers the entire Sword coast and may precipitate a war. Merchants are being attacked, especially if they happen to be dealing in the iron trade; the Zhentarim are being implicated and the Harpers are being forced to take action against this uprising by some force of evil. If the player's character is for the common good, he or she will need to unravel the stratagem behind this struggle for power, and to prevent the war which threatens to engulf the region – or, if not, the goal is to try and assume more power in the process...To say much more might spoil the game."



If well realized, the plot will encompass a richness far superior to many RPGs and certainly to pseudo-RPGs such as *Diablo*, which Muzyka admires for its beauty, but wants to offer *more*.

So what is more? We should expect a much wider variety of choices and actions than is usual, all in real time and including some very sophisticated AI. A party of up to 8 characters with many specialties is managed through an easy-to-use graphical scripting language. Characters are either pre-scripted, or the player may fully or partially edit scripts for the NPCs. TSR's *AD&D* guidelines are ever present, but more versatility will be apparent in the characters' interactions with one another. Some characters will interact amicably, others might squabble and put "kick me" signs on each other's backs. You will be able to edit how each character will react to specific types of opponents.

Although one might feel that a real-time environment is directly inverse to the classic world of *AD&D*, the designers believe that the flavor of the original game is maintained while its computer playability is enhanced. Balance is kept via an individual "initiative combat round" (significantly shorter than in the pen and paper game), allowing for action to occur simultaneously while adhering to the rule-set. Also present is the universal "you can turn down the speed so that it *seems* like turn-based" encouragement to opponents of real-time. Will purists be assuaged? Also, No DMs were harmed in the production of this feature.

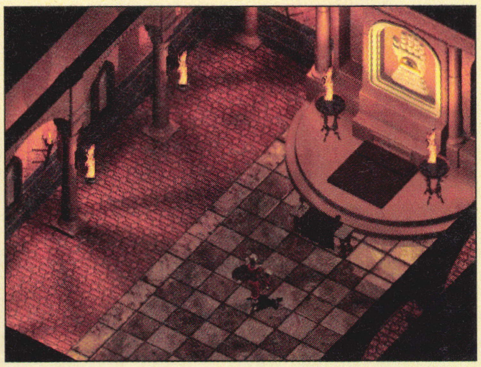
As in any game having a storyline, a beginning and an end, true non-linearity is impossible, but in this case careful attention has been paid to providing as open-ended an experience as possible. We will see an episodic game filled with sub-quests, the outcome of which will often be determined by choices the player makes in the course of each chapter. The player will have a reputation to which others in the game will react, and his or her own choices will be effected by previous behavior. Solutions to various problems can be solved according to the player's own methods based on character type or particular strengths – brute force, intelligence, magic or animal husbandry.

As is almost inevitable these days, *Baldur's Gate* is jumping on the multiplayer bandwagon. The multiplayer game is going to be like a MUD, with hundreds of players interacting in the same world as in the single player game. In the multiplayer world, sub-quests will be updated on a regular basis to add diversity and longevity to on-line activity.

Baldur's altar ▶

Baldur's inn

▼



The graphics are non-tiled, fully-pre-rendered in 16 bit color with a top down third person isometric view. The natural lighting effects are gorgeous and the world immense, with over 10,000 individual locations and a map that enables you to return instantly to any place you've already visited. The design team is concurrently developing editing tools; back to back sequels are expected to follow quickly as are mission-expansion packs. *Baldur's Gate* will bring your character to level six, and the next two installments will increase the level by six apiece (in true *AD&D* range).

Expected in fourth quarter 1997 from Interplay, *Baldur's Gate* is something on which you might want to place a wager. Throw down a few bucks across the board. This title could rock. *–Cindy Yans*

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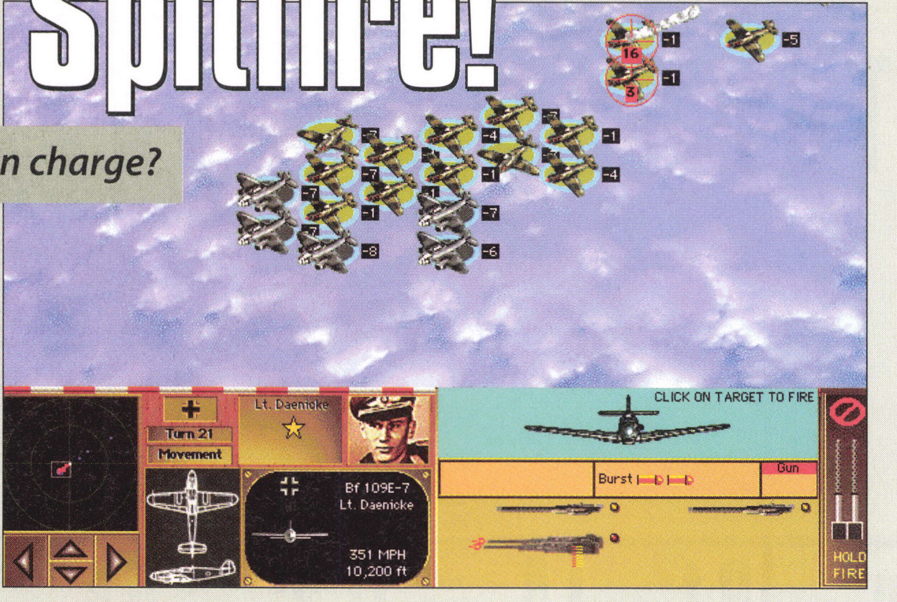
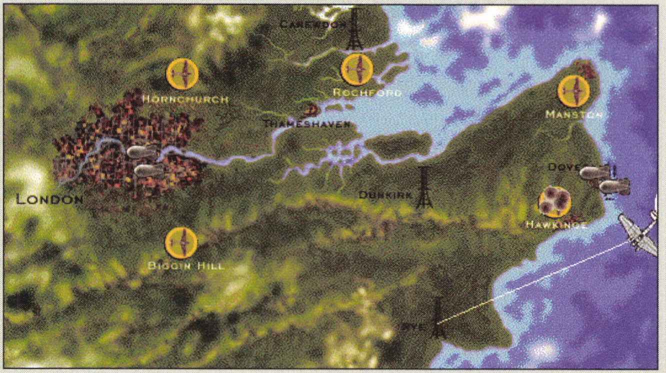
Several Flights of British fighters scythe through a German bomber formation



A radio message to bring both fear and anticipation to a World War II German airman, "Achtung! Spitfire!" was the cry he heard through his headphones when British Spitfire aircraft were sighted; while it didn't mean automatic doom, it certainly meant that things would soon heat up in the skies around him. Set above either France or Britain, *Achtung Spitfire!* is Avalon Hill's "prequel" to last year's *Over the Reich*, a game of tactical air combat over Western Europe in the later half of World War II. Moving further back in time, *Achtung Spitfire!* portrays a similar scale of air combat earlier in the War, specifically portraying the doomed Allied effort in the face of German Blitzkrieg in the spring of 1940 and the famous Battle of Britain later that year (and, depending on your skill, Operation Sealion, the never-executed German invasion of England).



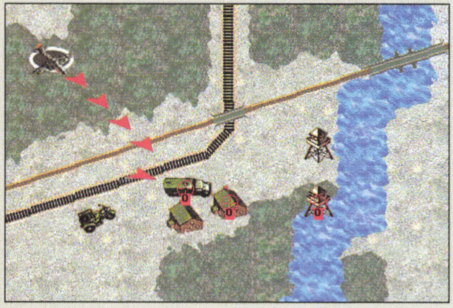
The strategic map from the Battle of Britain campaign as seen from the German perspective. Note the raid returning to France from bombing the base at Hawkinge and another one headed out to bomb the radar station at Rye

The first thing to make clear is that, like its predecessor, *Achtung Spitfire!* is not a flight simulator; you as the gamer do not sit in a cockpit throwing your plane about the sky in real time; instead, you control many planes in a turn-based game of tactical air combat. Yes, you can enter specific control inputs, but you get as much time as you want for each plane, and can adjust your inputs as much as you wish until you execute that plane's turn. Turns each represent several seconds of "real time."

At the tactical level, *Achtung Spitfire!* plays very much like *Over the Reich*; while there will be some different aircraft (including those from the 1940 French Air Force), and while specific scenarios will model events from the appropriate period, actual gameplay at the tactical level appears nearly identical in the version of the game we have. It is at the *strategic* level that gameplay has been changed (and improved) the most. Instead of the relatively non-interactive strategic mode of *Over the Reich*, missions now have a very interactive "real-time" strategic arena (don't worry–even the alpha includes a pause feature that lets you stop the game to enter orders).

An alpha version of the game lets you play the test version of the Battle of Britain campaign from either the British or German sides. The strategic map for this campaign covers the sector stations of Royal Air Force 11 Group and portrays airfields, Chain Home radar stations, Dover, Thameshaven, and, most importantly, the sprawl of London (which Winston Churchill described as "...a tremendous fat cow tied up to attract the beasts of prey"). As the British player it's up to you to decide who needs to sit the day out, to send out patrols, to shift aircraft, and to respond to incoming threats. You will receive reports of incoming raids, but are they accurate? Set the altitude of your interceptors too high and the raid may slip in underneath them. You may also encounter fighter sweeps and feints by the German player, or, if you're not careful, may lose your bases or radar "eyes" to bombing. If you're a particularly poor planner all your planes may be returning to base to refuel just as a massive raid appears on the horizon.

As the German player it will be up to you to allocate your scarce resources across many targets; do you send your fighters on sweeps to clear out defenders, or should they escort the bombers? Do you fly a few massive raids that will almost certainly get through but not hit many targets, or break into smaller, vulnerable raids in the hopes that you can slip through to hit more targets? Plan wrong and you'll fail to take out the RAF, but if you're successful you'll get to aid in the invasion of England. And this is just one of the campaigns; you have the whole fight from the Ardennes to Dunkirk to try out as well.



While level bombing is carried out from the strategic map, dive bombing and other ground assaults are portrayed tactically; here we have an Me-109 attempting to strafe a radar installation

Reichsmarschall Herman Goering, head of the *Luftwaffe*, reportedly said to his wife on September 7, 1940, "Yes, it has been a wonderful day, Emmy. I've sent my bombers to London; London's burning." With *Achtung Spitfire!* you'll get the chance to either repeat Goering's claim or prevent it. If all goes as planned, you should be playing the game by the 57th anniversary of *Adler Tag*. [*Note: Historical quotes from Avalon Hill's boardgame,* London's Burning] *–Scott Udell*

Achtung Spitfire! • *Avalon Hill* • *Windows, Macintosh*

WHEN YOU
DRIVE A TRUCK THIS
FRIGGIN' BIG,
YOU DON'T RUN
FROM TROUBLE.
YOU RUN OVER IT.

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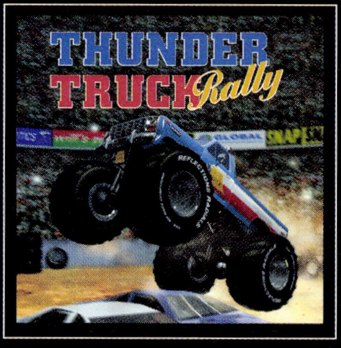

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PC CD ROM

a game by REFLECTIONS

KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PEACE TREATIES. FAILED!

DIPLOMACY. FAILED!

PASSIVE RESISTANCE. FAILED!

LOVE-INS. FAILED!

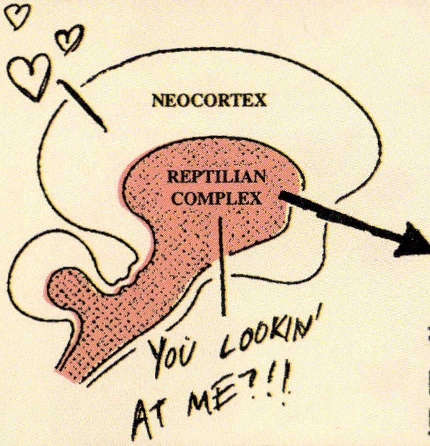
THE PEACE CORPS. FAILED!

UNITED NATIONS. FAILED!

THAT GUY IN FRONT OF THE

FOLK SONGS. FAILED!

HEAT. MAYBE.



HOW COULD WE HAVE BEEN SO WRONG FOR SO LONG? Talking about peace, singing about peace, protesting about peace--it's all been ONE BIG FARCE!! We can't tell ourselves to be peaceful any more than a computer can tell itself to do a pirouette! Bad brains will be bad brains! But Dr. D.G. Bartha's CyberDiversion Theory says, if we allow them to be bad in a place where bad ain't so bad (i.e. on the HEAT™ internet gaming network), it's actually good! We please our bad brains and no one gets hurt! HEAT IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD GLOBAL HARMONY!

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM- A BAD BRAIN:

THE BRAIN'S REPTILIAN COMPLEX TELLS US TO DOMINATE AND DESTROY! CYBERDIVERSION THEORY SAYS, DON'T LET THE PEACE PROCESS STIFLE THIS NATURAL TENDENCY FOR AGGRESSION! INSTEAD, LET IT THRIVE ON HEAT.NET, WHERE EVERYONE CAN DOMINATE AND DESTROY, BUT NO ONE CAN BE HARMED! ...*HEAT IS THE ANSWER!!*

PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS DOMINATE AND DESTROY EACH OTHER! We see it on the six o'clock news every single night! HEAT is just a place where we can dominate and destroy each other without traumatizing innocent families or having to do hard time! In fact, at HEAT.NET *YOU ARE ACTUALLY REWARDED WITH PRIZES FOR YOUR EFFICIENCY IN DOMINATING AND DESTROYING!!*

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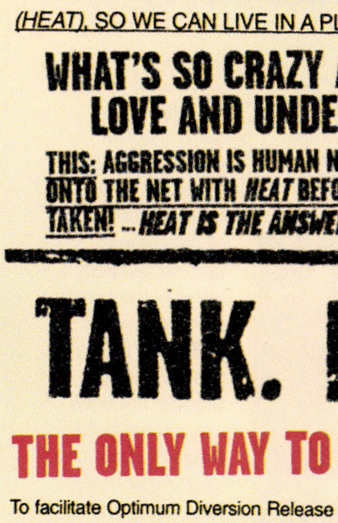
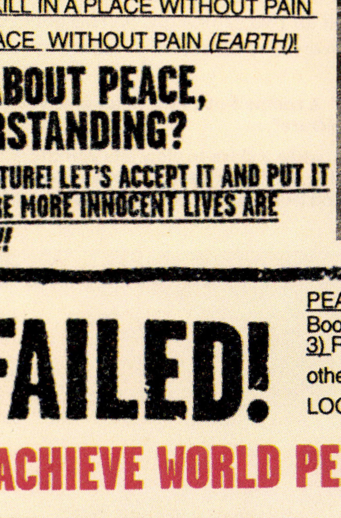
Scud



Blood



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City ____________ State ______ ZIP _____
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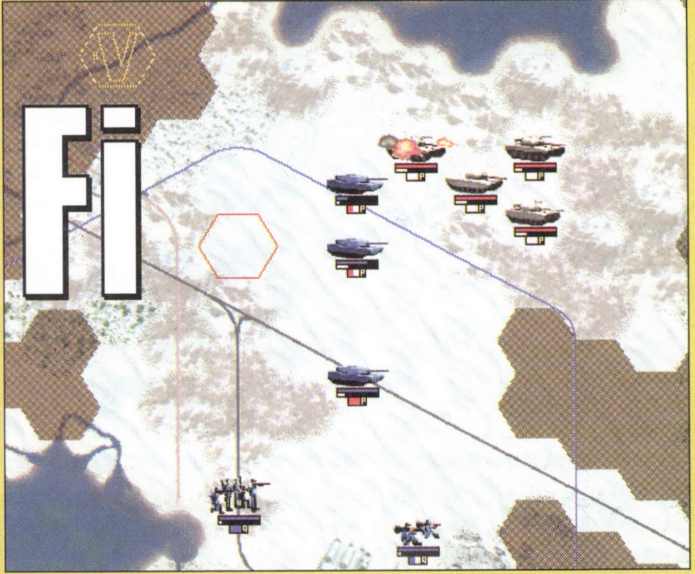
Welcoming the Marines to regions they haven't fought in in quite a while ▶

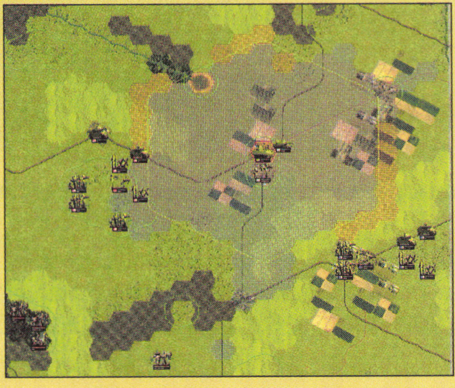


Semper Fi

Hitting the virtual beaches

The Marine Corps prides itself in being the force often the first called upon in a time of crisis; they're fast and flexible, able to deploy a complete combined-arms mix to distant locales on short notice. Ironically, they are able to achieve this flexibility despite (or perhaps because of) being the "simplest" of the U.S. Armed Forces; they are, for the most part, a distant fourth in terms of the complexity of their technology and the amount of resources they can call upon. Interactive Magic and developer Stanley Associates are attempting to capture this essential nature of the Marine Corps in their upcoming game, *Semper Fi*.

A tactical level wargame, it falls somewhere above the scale of *Steel Panthers II* and near that of the more complex *TacOps*. Units are generally small, with most representing platoons or below. Purely a game of modern conflict, it puts gamers up against an OPFOR (Opposing Force, armed with a fairly standard Third World mix of Soviet equipment and organized in an ex-Soviet manner) in a variety of terrain: desert, arctic, and temperate/jungle. While the conflicts modeled are hypothetical, a scenario editor will easily let you recreate tactical actions against any Soviet-style force (which includes, at a superficial level at least, many of the world's armies).



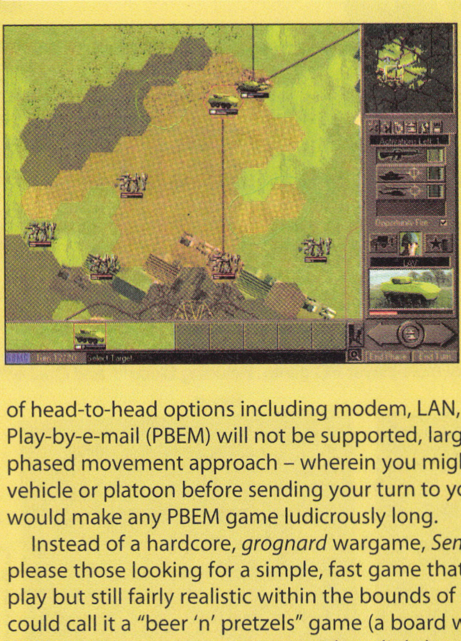
A turn-based game, *Semper Fi* eschews the typical "I move all/you move all" approach for one based on Action Phases and Initiative. Each side has a number of Action Phases per turn; for a phase, the computer makes a random check of the initiative (the USMC has a 60% chance of winning this check), and based on this, the "winning" side gets to move and/or attack with its eligible units *or* leaders. It is possible for a side to get multiple phases in a row, but eventually one side will run out of Action Phases for that turn and the other side gets to play, or Initiative may switch immediately and constantly. In an Action Phase, players command either a single unit or a commander and all his eligible units, ordering them to move and/or attack; once a unit or a leader is used, it is unavailable for the rest of the turn (with some exceptions).

From the user's standpoint, movement and combat should be fairly simple; the early versions of the interface look clean and uncluttered, and the initial information from Interactive Magic promises a fast moving design. This does not mean that the "behind the scenes" modeling is simplistic (although it's not to the level of, say, *Harpoon II*); rather, it's kept hidden so users can focus on the gameplay instead. For those interested, though, the manual, even in draft form, has plenty of data and design information, although Interactive Magic says "We're not sure if it is necessary to list all of our tables," so these might not make it into the final product.

As of this writing, Interactive Magic and Stanley Associates are still working on the selection of scenarios and campaigns. Current plans call for two campaigns (in two of the geographical areas the game covers) and a mixture of individual scenarios. Currently on the list are battles in Korea, Cuba, and Iraq, but with the game's editor users will be able to create their own conflicts (out of the generic unit mixes) and identify the forces involved; fighting in Bosnia, for example, or the Ukraine are both areas that could be gamed. In keeping with their new focus on multiplayer gaming, *Semper Fi* will support a variety of head-to-head options including modem, LAN, or over the Internet. Play-by-e-mail (PBEM) will not be supported, largely because the phased movement approach – wherein you might move only a single vehicle or platoon before sending your turn to your opponent – would make any PBEM game ludicrously long.

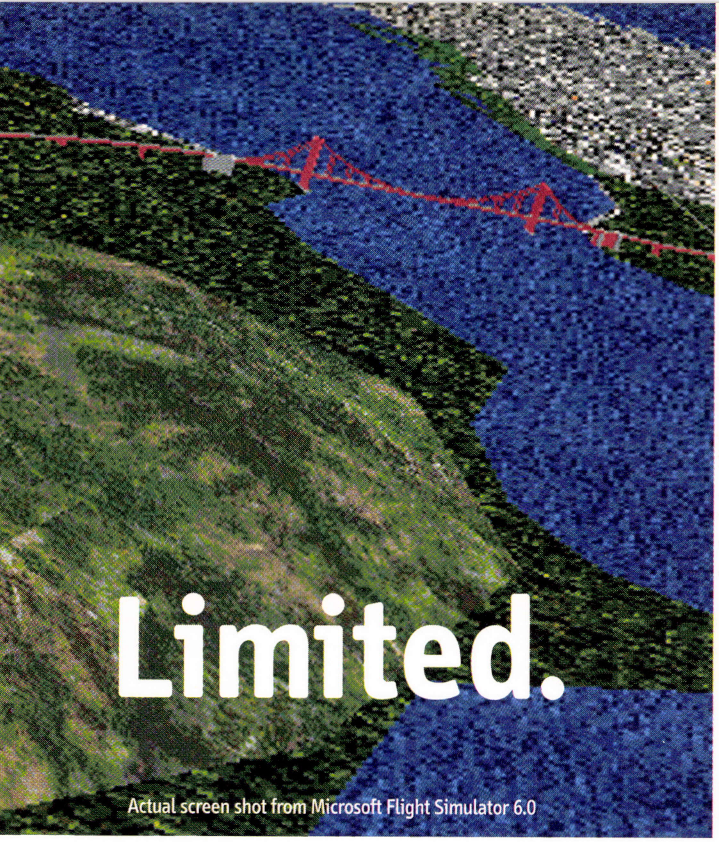
◀ A zoomed-out view helps give you the "big picture"...

...while a close-in view lets you check on a specific unit's tactical disposition. Note the clean and (for a wargame) simple user interface ▼

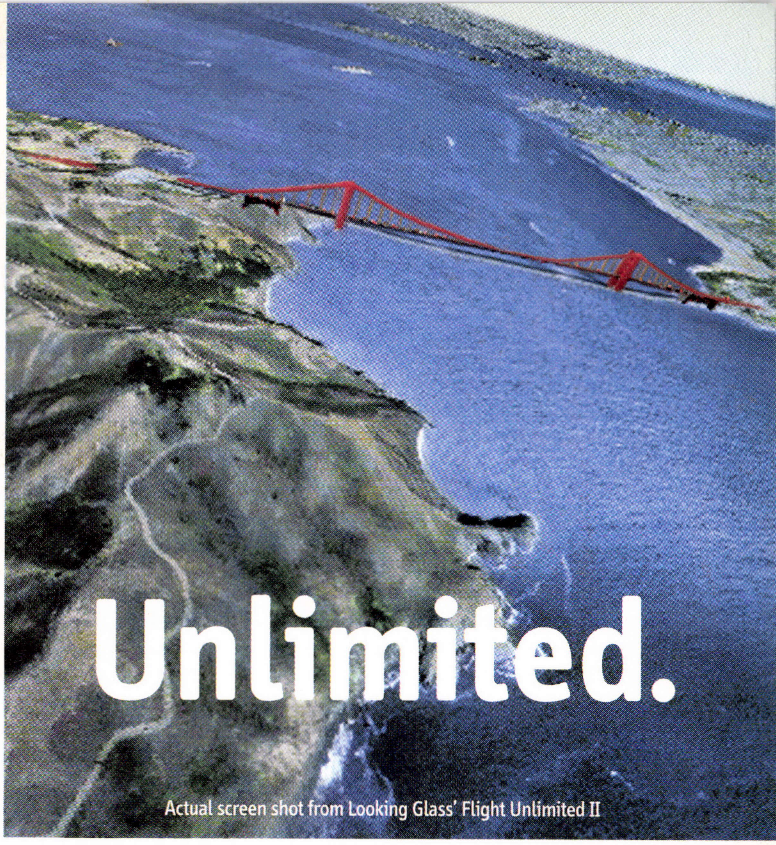


Instead of a hardcore, *grognard* wargame, *Semper Fi* aims to please those looking for a simple, fast game that is plenty of fun to play but still fairly realistic within the bounds of its design. While one could call it a "beer 'n' pretzels" game (a board wargamer term), the design of *Semper Fi* seems to povide a slightly more involved game than, say, the ahistorical *Panzer General* (which could be called a "rootbeer 'n' animal crackers" wargame). In other words, they're trying for fun but not at the expense of realism. Whether they can pull it off remains to be seen. *–Scott Udell*

Semper Fi • Interactive Magic • Windows 95



Actual screen shot from Microsoft Flight Simulator 6.0



Actual screen shot from Looking Glass' Flight Unlimited II

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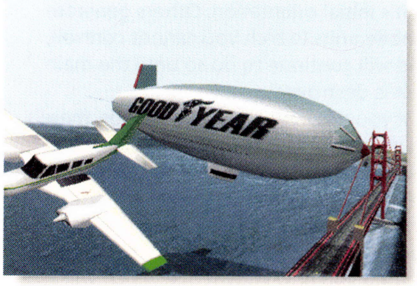
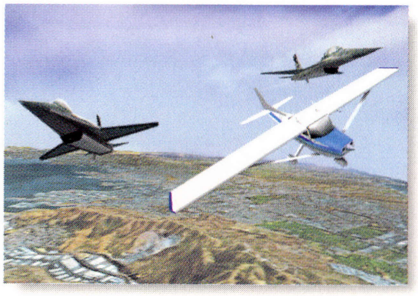
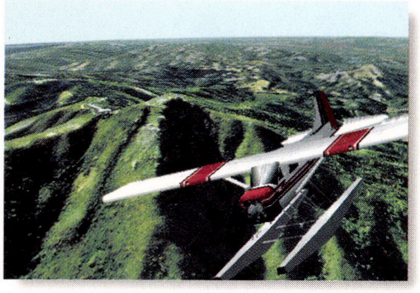


Fly through a sky filled with commercial, civilian and military aircraft. Real-time communication between you and Air Traffic Control gets you through the jam.



Experience 25 heart-pounding adventures, including dodging two F-16s with the license to kill when you violate restricted airspace.



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Storming the Internet

Activision brings real-time strategy to cyberspace with NetStorm

As more and more games are being designed specifically for the Internet, we're seeing a move from traditional gaming (Chess, Checkers, text-based RPGs) toward re-interpretations of more PC-centric designs and genres (see *Ultima Online* on page 44). Activision's *NetStorm* is a real-time strategy game, but after spending some quality online time with it, it's clear that it's not your average *Command & Conquer* clone.

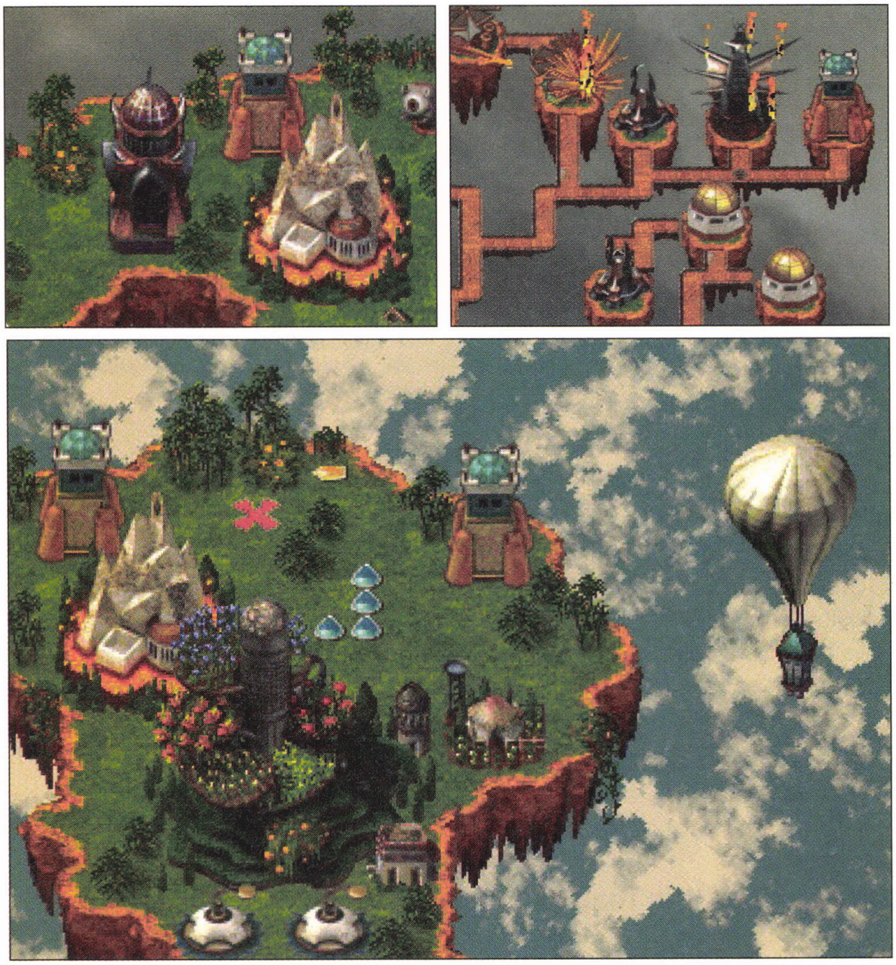
Taking place in a unique fantasy world, *NetStorm* allows you to take over island fortresses that float in the clouds and do battle with 2-7 players over neutral islands. If you win an island, you can take it with you and use it and the units that get placed on it during the course of a battle in your next conflict. What makes *NetStorm* different from most *Command & Conquer* games is that you don't micromanage your units – most are stationary, and if they do move they follow fixed patterns that the user cannot alter, making *NetStorm* a still hectic game of planning, rather than micromanagement.

The game starts by dropping the player in the Serenisphere, a safe haven where you'll find your island(s). You have a certain amount of resources (dubbed Storm Power) to build a Temple, the unit that allows you to descend to the Pyrosphere, where the battles take place. Alternately, you can practice offline by fighting mock battles at the War College.

Matching players to others of a similar skill level has always been a problem for online games. *NetStorm* uses a system that is based on your win-loss ratio. After you capture a certain number of islands, you get a badge, which allows you to create more powerful units. After getting a badge, the game will automatically filter out any players who aren't at the same level, unless a player with lesser skills agrees to a match.

Players in the Pyrosphere will be represented by their islands, and players will be allowed to get information about the strength of their fellow gamers. Randomly generated neutral islands will be floating around; to join a game players "dock" one of these islands with the first player to do so becoming the game-master. Once everyone's ready, the battle begins.

[clockwise from below left] The units feature an interesting graphic design; Here is a mess of bridges with units deployed on them. The one with sparks over it taking damage; The blue raindrop-shaped objects can be cashed in for extra storm power. The temple is in the middle



Now the fun begins. You start to place defensive and offensive units on your island and building bridges connecting you to the neutral island or your opponents. Units cost storm power (bridges do not), and you can increase that resource only by destroying enemy units.

All of the game's units are tied to the elements, such as wind, rain, thunder and sun, and it'll be up to the player to maintain a grid of elemental power (dubbed "influence" in the game's fiction) to power said units. When you place a power unit, it visually depicts its range of its influence, and some units will require the influence of multiple elements.

Combat units usually have a single purpose, and you're limited in how you can deploy that unit. Some only fire in one direction, so all you can do is change the unit's initial orientation. Others generate mobile units (which you cannot control), and will continue to do so until the main unit is destroyed.

If you can't capture other islands, there's an alternate ways to increase your power for future games. Each player has a high priest, and you can kidnap other player's priests, bring them to your island, return to the Serenisphere and sacrifice him to the gods, netting you new knowledge which will allow you to build more powerful pieces.

NetStorm is still being play balanced, so some of the features discussed here could change. One in particular is getting a lot of discussion, and that's concerning what happens if a player loses connection in midgame. Because you're not micromanaging units, the game can run without you being there (though no new units will be placed). The designers at Titanic Entertainment are mulling over whether to wait for the person to come back or yank them out of the Pyrosphere back to the Serenisphere (something you can do at any time during a game, but it takes enough time to make it dangerous). The final decision will come when the game's been online long enough to properly test both options.

With an intriguing premise and promise of low-latency Internet play, *NetStorm* could provide an interesting alternative to *Command & Conquer* and all of its various clones currently laying waste to the world's Internet bandwidth. –*Steve Bauman*

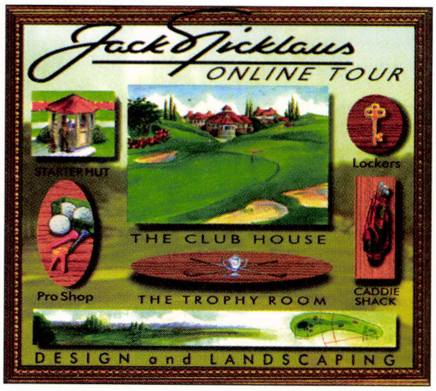
Jack-ing in to cyberspace

Accolade heads online with the Jack Nicklaus Online Tour

Golf would appear to be the ideal online sports game. It's turn-based and most importantly it doesn't require a low-latency connection to work. However, there is the risk that people will get bored waiting for other players to take their swing. Accolade, with their *Jack Nicklaus Online Tour* (available on Kesmai's Aries Online network), is taking the approach that golf, in the real-world, is a social activity, one where business deals are made and bets are lost. Welcome to a whole new way of doing business.

Accolade is using a clubhouse analogy for the launching point of this new site, and from here you'll be able to chat with other people, meet up with friends, and launch games of *Jack Nicklaus 4*. In typical fashion, you can create 4-player games on any course (there will be an area for people to download user-created courses as well).

"But I can do that for free with the boxed version of *Jack Nicklaus 4*," you say. You're right, but the online version has things like tournaments to keep it interesting. The Tournament Play section of the site features organized tournaments run like the actual PGA tour. Hundreds of players will compete against one another, with sponsors offering prizes.



The main menu screen

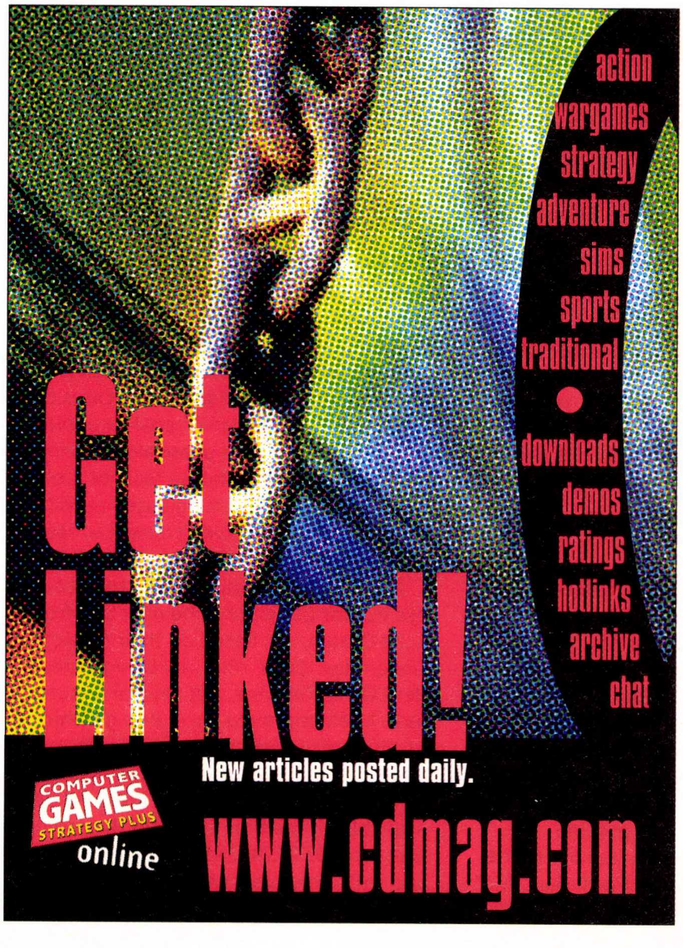
A month before a tournament, entry forms will be posted. On the Monday before the tournament, the administrators will upload the course to the service. Players will download it, and if they have the boxed version of *Jack Nicklaus 4*, be able to play it on or offline.

There will be three types of tournaments: opens, invitationals and invitationals with open qualifiers. An invitational is for people who've filled out forms and have been accepted for a tournament. These will take place over a certain number of days, and could be a 72 hole tournament or lower.

Opens are, as the name implies, open tournaments where qualifying rounds weed out players with higher scores. Just as in real golf, course pairings in the early rounds are set up by users or randomly generated by the system. After the first two days, players are matched based on their scores.

Unlike real golf, everyone in a tournament will be playing their 18 holes of golf at the same time, with a time limit to keep the games from taking forever. If a player drops out of the game, they'll be able to jump back in the game, but not with their original group (who will have continued on without them).

It's clear that this product offers a lot of potential entertainment for computer golf fans (and you know who you are). If everything goes as planned, the *Jack Nicklaus Online Tour* should be online in late 1997.
–*Steve Bauman*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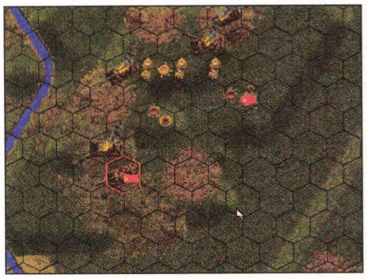
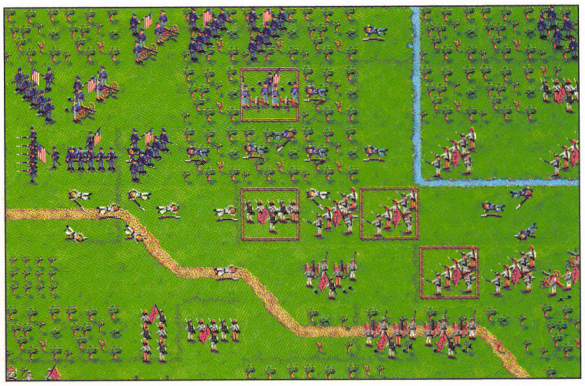
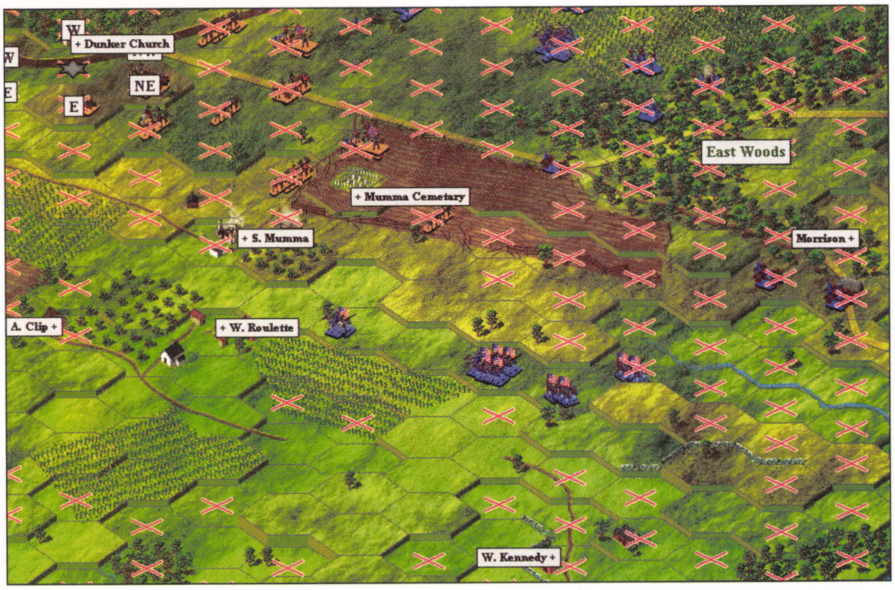
▼ My 70's era Soviet armored advance was stopped cold by my opponent





▲ …by Design, Inc.'s upcoming Gettysburg

▼ Learning lessons from PBEM; here I'm using the terrain masking Phil Thé used so effectively against me to sneak up on a different opponent (the hexes with red Xs can't see my column moving on the Mumma property)



This month's column could easily have been subtitled "learning to eat humble pie," because as I've taken the whole-hearted plunge into play-by-e-mail (PBEM) gaming, I've been getting my keester handed to me, filleted and well done… and it's been a lot of fun! I've been a reluctant participant in multiplayer; my gaming is often all-hours and when the mood strikes (and, contrary to popular belief, the staffers of *CGS+* do *not* spend all day playing games, much as we'd like to). Multiplayer gaming in my favorite genres–strategy and wargaming–can be time consuming; even in some of the fastest playing games like *Command & Conquer*, a multiplayer session can take well over an hour with several players, and some of the really complex ones can take much, much longer (and few feature a save game feature for multiplayer, something that always mystifies me). PBEM gaming, however, does double duty, mixing my favorite playing style (*i.e.*, gaming when and where I want it, without the pressure to "schedule a time" with opponents sometimes half-way around the world) with the joy of competing against the best AIs on the planet–other people.

The concept behind PBEM is simple: you play a turn–move your vessels, fire your guns, buy that stock, whatever–and save it to a file, which you then e-mail to your opponent. They may get to review the results of your turn (if the game has a "replay" feature), and then they enter some response. If this is more than a two-player game, the file gets mailed to the next person in the chain, continuing until it gets back to you. Most PBEM is two player, but some titles (especially some shareware titles created by denizens of the 'net) can support many more players; *Stars!*, for example, supports 16.

If you're interested in trying this fascinating side of the hobby out, you've got plenty of options. Wargames seem to be most likely to support PBEM (probably carry-over from the days of board wargaming and play-by-mail), but others do as well. Games I've tried out recently have included *Shiloh* (getting whupped at Wilson's Creek playing *either* side), several different scenarios from *Antietam* (in fact, while he was too much of a gentleman to crow, Phil Thé's tips article had a picture of one of our games, and his text used my blunders as great illustrations of what *not* to do), and some *Steel Panthers II* (good for shorter, faster games).

While the games take a long time to play out (at a phase or so a day, a 20-something turn in a *Battleground* game can take a couple of months), you can often have several going at once. I suppose if you're sneaky you could even try the chess-duel trick of competing against two experts at once, playing them off each other and learning a lot. Learning's a big part of it for me, and I can't wait to get more battles in. Shucks, after a few more months I may even be ready for the big time: PBEM ladders hosted at sites on the 'net.

Intell reports

While they haven't gotten anything out the door lately, Arsenal Publishing seems to have some big plans, plans which include signing some impressive design talent from the board wargame community. Signed first was Frank Chadwick, on of the major figures in board wargaming and co-founder and president of the now-defunct Game Designer's Workshop (GDW). Arsenal will be working with Chadwick to port his *Command Decision* miniatures rules to the PC. The second signing was with Gary "Mo" Morgan, designer of the board wargames *TAC AIR* and *Flight Leader* for Avalon Hill. This time around they'll be working to bring a previously un-published design of Morgan's to the PC; about all Arsenal has said so far is that it is tentatively called *Iron Hand: Air Warfare in the Missile Age*. In both cases the designer will work with Arsenal for about six months on the design phase alone, then Arsenal and a new in-house team of programmers they are putting together will start coding; you shouldn't expect to see any of the fruits of these agreements until 1998.

Mac wargamers might want to keep an eye out for *Gettysburg*, the next title from …by Design, Inc. Based on their *Musket Fire* engine (*CGS+* 78), …by Design president Owen Gwynne says several features have been improved, including graphics, AI, and status reports, and several items added: "Capture of enemy guns, Ammo levels, [and] added sounds." It should be available by the time you read this (contact them at 800.527.7472 or designinc@aol.com), and we'll bring you a review as soon as we get it. *–Scott Udell*

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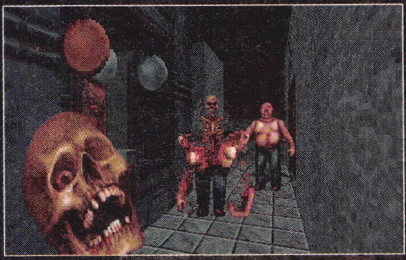

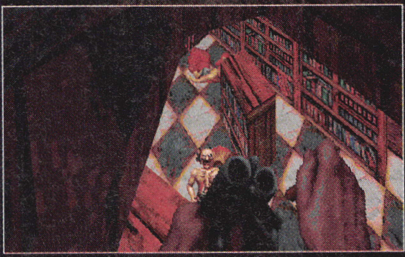

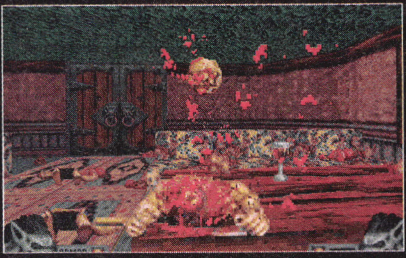

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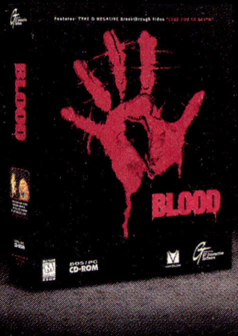

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GT Interactive Software

On War

Harpoon II Admiral's Edition: Database Editor

This article demonstrates how to convert an F-15C to an F22A. You can build nearly anything you desire with the Database editor. However, *Harpoon II* doesn't support ballistic missiles or mobile ground systems. A dedicated player could build World War II platforms, but gameplay would be much different due to how the game models certain weapon systems.

Before building a platform, find the basic information on the weapon system. Once completed, you can either build it from scratch (not recommended) or modify an existing one.

Hit by Lightning

Enter the database from the *Harpoon II* directory by typing DBEDIT. You can also play the game and construct scenarios from the database editor. First, select Database | Copy Entry, find the F-15C, and click <OK>. Change the name from Eagle to Lightning II and the model number to F-22A.

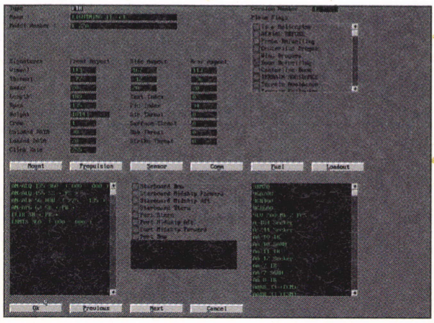
Next check the Plane Flags and ensure they're set to Boom Refueling, Terrain Following, Advanced Bombsight, Large Runway, and Large Aircraft.

Table 1: F-22A Basic Data

Length (decimeters)	189
Span	135
Height	50
Weight-loaded (KG)	18143
Power Plant:	2 F119-PW-100
Crew	1
Rate of Climb*	255 (max value)
Unloaded Data**	30
Loaded Data**	20

** 255 is the max value permitted by the program.*

*** These numbers are based on observing values for other aircraft in the database. You can use GDW's Harpoon procedures to compute them.*



▲ **The F-22 as shown in Harpoon II**

Enter the Length, Span, Weight, Crew, Unloaded Data, Loaded Data, and Climb Rate using the values in **Table 1**. Set the Text index to 0 and the Pic Index to 94 (no entry). Leave Air, Surface, Sea, and Strike threat at 0.

Next, calculate the thermal, visual, and radar signature modes using the following equations (found in the on-line help files): (See **Table 2**)

Vfr=100*log10(s*h/5)
Vs=100*log10(l*h/2)
IRf=V-200+10
IRs=V-200+20
IRr=V-200+50
R=V-30 (Calculate for front, rear, and side aspects)

Where,
V=Visual Aspect
Vfr=Visual Aspect, Front or Rear
Vs=Side Aspect
s=wing span (meters)
h=Height (meters)
l=Length (Meters)
IRf=Thermal Aspect Front
IRs=Thermal Aspect Side
IRr=Thermal Aspect Rear
R=Radar Aspect

I did not calculate the radar value in this example, but based them on the F-117. The calculated value is too high. The thermal value may be too high as well.

Now create the F119-PW-100 engines. Click on <OK> and select Database | Edit Entry | Propulsion. Select Create New Entry and Click on <OK>. In the name field, type "2 F119-PW-100", version "1", text index "0".

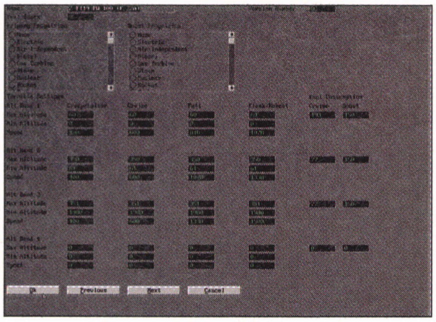
Select Primary and Boost Propulsion as "Jet" and enter the values from **Table 3**. Leave Altitude Band 4 blank and click on <OK> when finished. Altitude settings are in meters while speed is knots. If you disagree with my figures, go ahead and use what you think is right.

Return to the F-22 Entry and input the new power plant by clicking on Propulsion. Double click on the F-15 powerplant in the left window and then double click on your new F-22 powerplant in the right window.

Mount requires no changes because the F-22 uses the M-61A Vulcan gatling gun. Leave the Sensors, Comms, and Fuel the same as the F-15. The purist, of course, can go find these numbers, probably in one of the new F-22 simulators.

Click on Loadout and remove all the loadouts except ATA#74 (AIM-120 AMRAAM) c8 from the left-hand window by double clicking on them.

Finally, Click on <OK> to leave the database editor, then select Database | Save Annexes and you're finished. With this explanation, plus the on-line tutorials, you should be able to build any platform you desire in *Harpoon II*. Good luck in the *Harpoon II* shipyard! *–Michael K. Robel*



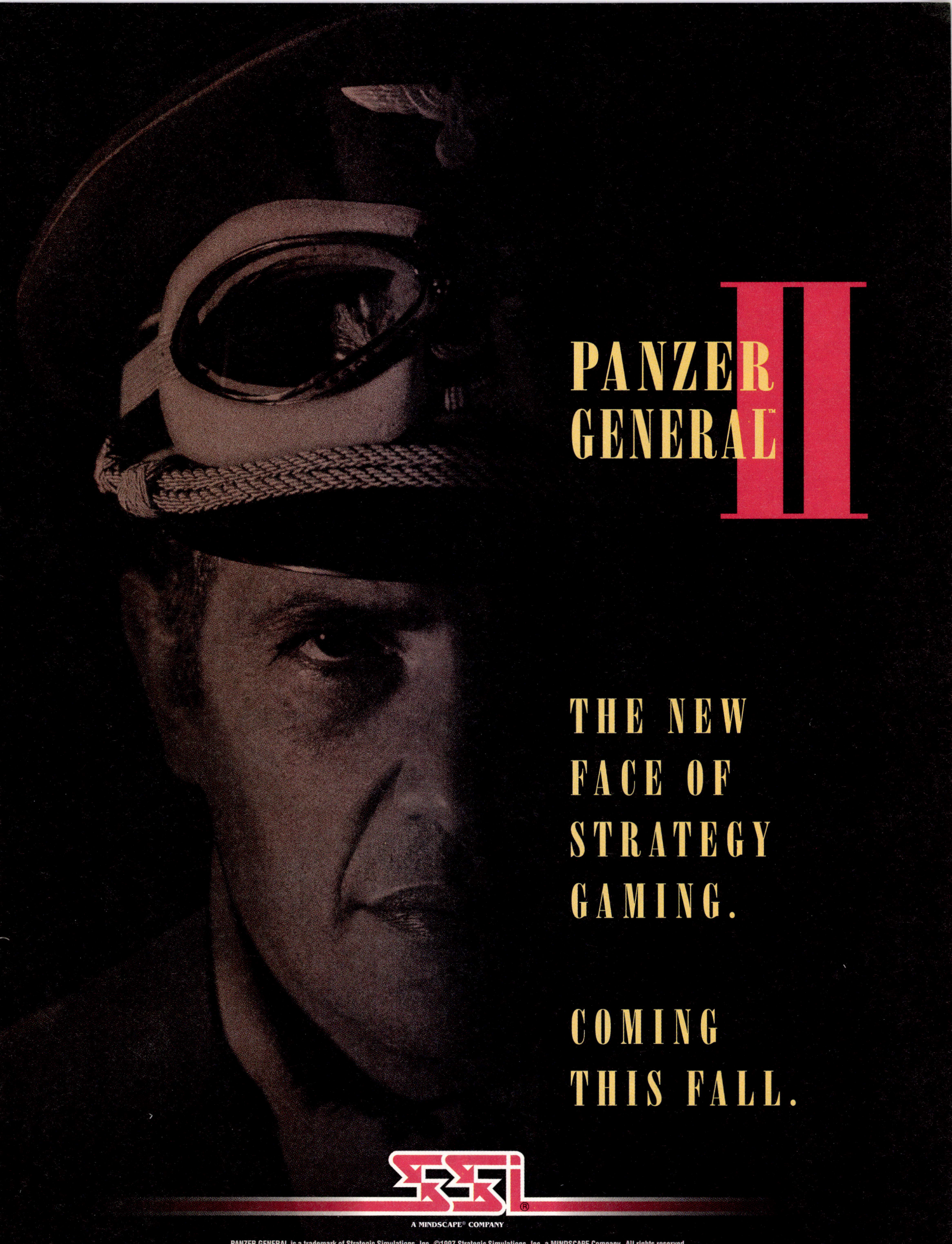
▲ **Build an engine**

Table 2: Calculated Signature Values

Signature	Front	Side	Rear
Visual	113	167	113
Thermal	-77	-12	-36
Radar	20	20	20*

Table 3: Altitude Band Settings

					Fuel Consumption:	
Alt Band 1	**Creep/ Loiter**	**Cruise**	**Full**	**Flank/Reheat**	**Cruise**	**Boost**
Max Alt	60	60	60	60	193	250
Min Alt	0	0	0	0	-	-
Speed	370	900	1204	1478	-	-
Alt Band 2						
Max Alt	350	350	350	350	77	250
Min Alt	61	61	61	61	-	-
Speed	370	900	1204	1478	-	-
Alt Band 3						
Max Alt	2000	2000	2000	2000	77	250
Min Alt	351	351	351	351	-	-
Speed	370	900	1204	1478	-	-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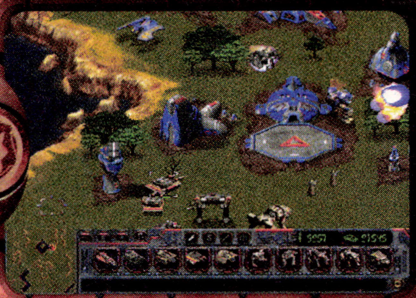

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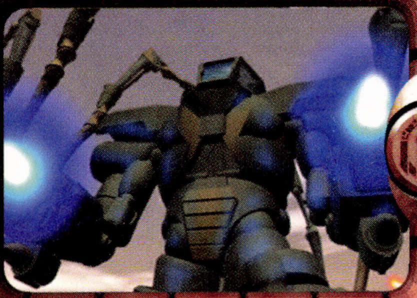

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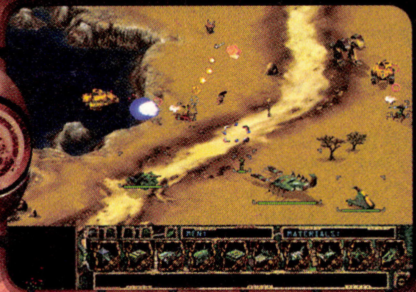

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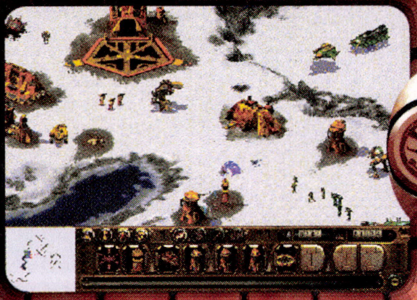

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Theme Hospital

Quality health care for a less populated tomorrow

COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS STAMP OF APPROVAL

Anyone who's ever been in a hospital, watched General Hospital, or taken their Official "ER" lunch box to the office will definitely want to give *Theme Hospital*, a new simulation from Bullfrog Productions, a permanent place on their hard drive. With plenty of tasks, and an authentically feverish pace, there's never a dull moment in this game.

Initially, players are granted their first hospital, with orders to make it successful and profitable. From an angled top-down view of the facility, players build the necessary rooms, clinics and amenities to furnish a functional, and hopefully thriving, hospital.

As the game progresses, larger and more hectic hospitals are offered as a promotion. By the latter stages, the game takes on the frenetic pace of titles like, believe it or not, *Red Alert*. Keeping abreast of the ever-changing needs of your hospice, while meeting the victory criteria laid before you by the Ministry of Health, keeps fingers hopping and Bloaty Heads popping.

Theme Hospital truly comes alive after watching the activities that transpire within the game. Doctors rifle through folders on their desks. Patients let it rip in the rest rooms. Surgeons dress in scrubs for pending surgeries, all animated in painstaking detail.

This game tries very seriously not to be taken seriously, and succeeds through the inclusion of humorous diseases and even more hilarious treatments. Take, for example, The King Complex. As tragic folks taken over by the spirit of Elvis himself (who took a hiatus from the grocery store tabloids just to grace this game), only the fine-tuned skills of a psychiatrist will meet the needs of these patients. Or Slack Tongue, caused by the excessive discussion of soap operas. Only cure? Chop the tongue off with quick, efficient, and painful ease.

At first, it'll take a little time to figure out the necessary steps to make each hospital run smoothly. After a couple hours, the mechanics of game play become autonomic, allowing gamers to adjust their focus to the actual needs at hand. There's no feature more welcome than the speed adjustment, set anywhere from a crawling speed to "Dead before they're through the door" mode. It's easy for the amount of decisions and tasks to overwhelm you in the blink of an eye. Being able to adjust the speed of the game to catch up to the twenty piles of puke around the receptionist's desk brings welcome relief when it's most needed.

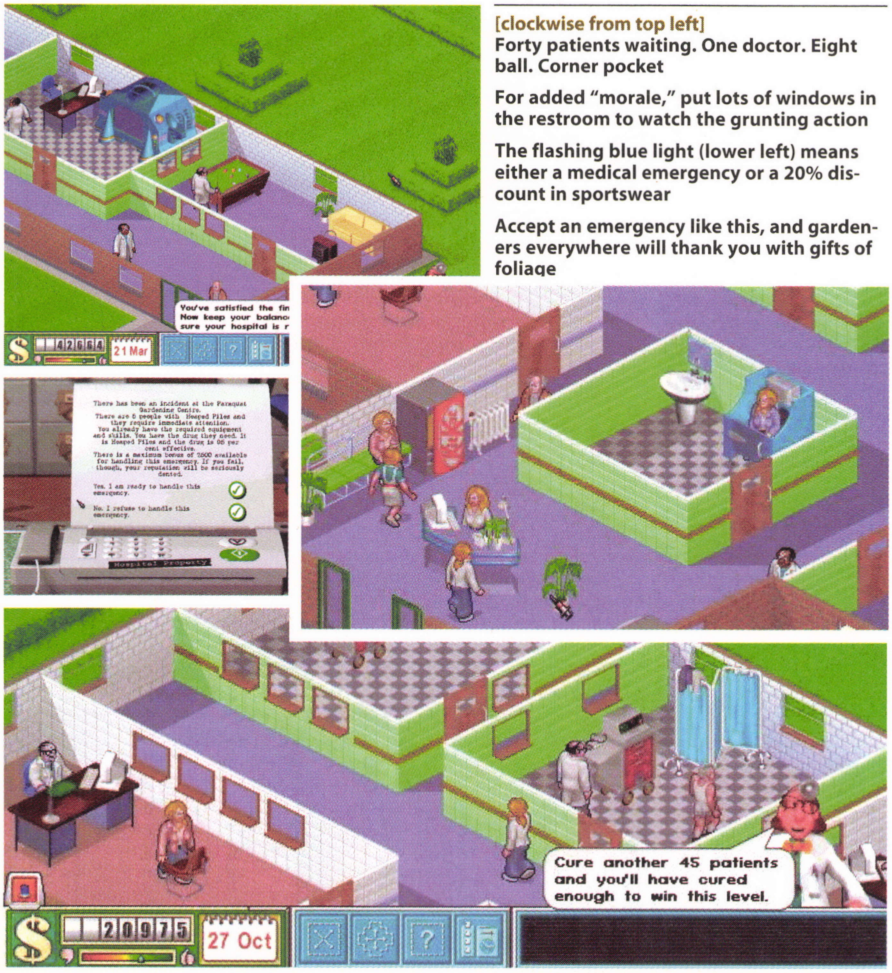
Don't be fooled by the humorous undertones of *Theme Hospital*. Beneath the mirth and aortic antics lies a polished, balanced simulation. One of the toughest requirements of a simulation like this is to minimize the amount of tedious micromanagement while still allowing players enough to do that they're immersed into the game world. On that front, the game clearly succeeds.

As a nurse, the pace of the game seemed very much like that of urban hospitals in the real world. Plan on spending most of your time shuffling between day to day care, specialized treatment, staffing concerns, expansion, research, and putting out proverbial fires that creep up.

An on-screen helper tempers the load of responsibility somewhat, and an excellent overhead paging system gives feedback about trouble spots in the hospital. The first time you spy one of the less skilled doctors shooting pool in the lounge with ten ailing patients at his office door, you'll howl long enough to find the "Eject From the Staffing Roster" button.

With all that's fun about this game, a few nasty germs infect it. Physically drawing out new rooms in your hospital can be both tricky and awkward. An accessible X-Ray view showing what's behind rooms and walls would be nice. Multi-player was specifically promised and not delivered. Even though *Theme Hospital* doesn't feel like multi-player material (except maybe a duel with syringes to see who can blast the other with the highest concentration of Lidocaine), a promise is a promise.

If you've ever been irked about how things are done in a hospital, here's your chance to do it your way. It won't take long to find out that, like life, you can't please everyone all the time. *Theme Hospital* offers plenty of enjoyment and hours of fun. Just keep the doctor/nurse relationships platonic, or you'll have a nasty outbreak of "additional Staff infection." –*Anne Royal*



You've satisfied the fin
Now keep your balanc
sure your hospital is r

There has been an incident at the Paraquat Gardening Centre.
There are 6 people with Heaped Piles and they require immediate attention.
You already have the required equipment and skills. You have the drug they need. It is Heaped Piles and the drug is 96 per cent effective.
There is a maximum bonus of 2500 available for handling this emergency. If you fail, though, your reputation will be seriously dented.

Yes. I am ready to handle this emergency. ✓

No. I refuse to handle this emergency. ✓

Cure another 45 patients and you'll have cured enough to win this level.

[clockwise from top left]

Forty patients waiting. One doctor. Eight ball. Corner pocket

For added "morale," put lots of windows in the restroom to watch the grunting action

The flashing blue light (lower left) means either a medical emergency or a 20% discount in sportswear

Accept an emergency like this, and gardeners everywhere will thank you with gifts of foliage

★★★★☆

Theme Hospital

Bullfrog Productions • www.bullfrog.co.uk • Requirements: DOS: 486 DX2/66 or higher, 8MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM; Windows 95: Pentium, 8MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: None

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Battles Forgotten War	NOW	$42	Die Hanse	NOW	$55	Knightmare Chess	NOW	$13	Robo Rally	NOW	$33
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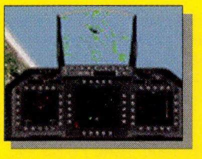
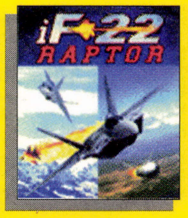


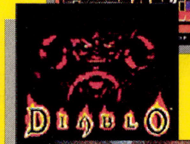


'IF-22 RAPTOR' The most lethal jet fighter ever designed. Combining advanced stealth capabilities with superior dogfighting and air-to-ground strike capability, you will dominate the skies of the 21st century. You will soar over more than 160,000 square miles of photorealistic terrain. Strap yourself into an active cockpit where everything you see, every switch and button actually works, where you can simply click on the controls, right there on the screen

Interactive Magic
Release Date: 07/97 PC CD $49

'COMANCHE 3' Missiles away! The helicopter itself is fully light-sourced, shaded and rendered with 3D real-time animation, while easier to get into and handle. Night time maybe the right time for many of Comanche's missions.

NOVALOGIC
Release Date: NOW PC CD $49



'DIABLO' As a young boy, you return to your village to find it razed and your family dead. Exploration of the countryside reveals that a similar fate has befallen neighboring towns except for one.

Blizzard
Release Date: NOW PC CD $37

'KRUSH, KILL N' DESTROY' Set in the 25th century, mission briefings makes your objectives perfectly clear, it is up to you to direct history and save the future of your planet.

Electronic Arts
Release Date: NOW CD $38

PACIFIC GENERAL

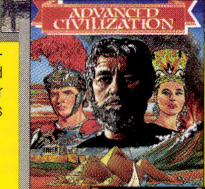
'PACIFIC GENERAL' With full Japanese and Allied Campaigns to choose from, a Scenario Editor and Battle Generator, you will command the Pacific as no other general has. Victory conditions are based on capturing enemy hexes, losses to your own forces and enemy casualties. Night scenarios reflect the Japanese penchant for surprise night attacks.

SSI
Release Date: 07/97 PC CD $45

Axis & Allies

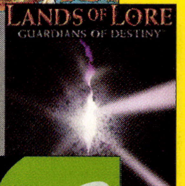
'AXIS & ALLIES' Decide the fate of a nation and the destiny of the world. The Balkans have fallen. Pearl Harbor has been attacked. Wake Island is in Japanese hands and Rommel has the British on the run!

Milton Bradley
Release Date: NOW BG $33



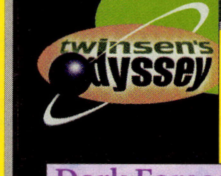
'ADVANCED CIVILIZATION' retains the essential elements of civilization, and can be learned quickly. The additional cards ensure a greater diversity of cultures, while the new Calam-ities make the game even more challenging.

Avalon Hill
Release Date: NOW BG $25



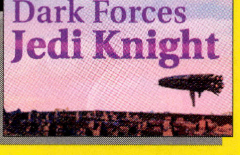
'LANDS OF LORE II' You are Luther, cursed son of the Sorceress of Darkness, exploring treacherous lands in search of ancient magic, a super power that will release you from your vile birthright.

Virgin
Release Date: 08/97 PC CD $48



'TWINSEN'S ODYSSEY' involves travel not only to Twinsen's home world, under attack by the Esmer aliens, but off to Twinsun's moon and beyond. Twinsen's job, as Grand Poobah of Twinsun magic, is to stop the Esmers, save the children, save the magic and make Twinsun safe.

Activision
Release Date: NOW PC CD $46



'DARK FORCES JEDI KNIGHT' In your serach for the man who murdered your father, you go to the Valley of the Jedi, where 1000's of Jedi are trapped. You can fight as a Jedi or embrace the Dark Side. Which ever role you choose, you will need all the Power of the Force yaou can summon, when you encounter the seven Dark Jedi.

LucasArts
Release Date:NOW PC CD $53

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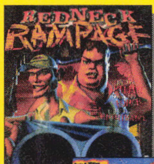


'REDNECK RAMPAGE' is a ruckus-raisin' riot of a 1st person 3D shooter set in the town of Hickston, Arkansas. Armed with up to ten impractical weapons, players blast their way through country bars, trailer parks and chicken processing plants in search of their pig who's been abducted by evil aliens.

Interplay
Release Date: NOW PC CD $46

'LEISURE SUIT LARRY 7-LOVE FOR SAIL' drops a world class lounge lizzard onto a cruise ship filled with gorgeous women. Sort along with Larry using an authentic scratch 'n' sniff card included in the box. Meet the ship's sexy skipper, a casino fly , a mother-daughter singing duo and more.

Sierra
Release Date: NOW PC CD $48

'BIRTHRIGHT' You are the leader of your own kingdom and domain. It's up to you to wage war or preserve peace. At a single command, armies march and kingdoms fall. With the blood abilities of a born king, you command heroes, wizards and might armies. But will it be enough?

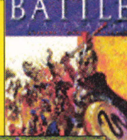
Sierra
Release Date: NOW CD $29

'THRUSTMASTER F-22 PRO' With a powder coated metal base, glass filled ABS handle, metal gimbal mechanism, and heavy gauge spring tension, the F-22 PRO gives you the edge you need in advanced tactical warfare.

Thrustmaster
Release Date: NOW PC $128

'THRUSTMASTER F-16 TQS' Complete your arsenal of controls with this fully programmable throttle with thumb trackball and requires Thrustmaster's F-16 FLCS.

Thrustmaster
Release Date: NOW PC $108



'GREAT BATTLES OF ALEXANDER' The armies of ancient Greece are massed against you. You and your forces stand against seemingly insurmountable odds. Defeat will drag you into obscurity, while victory will herald the beginning of the most spectacular military campaign in history.

Interactive Magic
Release Date:NOW PC CD $44

'BATTLEGROUND: BULL RUN' The 1st battle won Gen. Thomas J. Jackson the nickname "Stonewall Jackson." During following summer of 1862, Gen. Robert E. Lee lured Gen. Pope's Union troops into a trap on the same battlefield, paving the way for the Confederate invasion of the North.

TalonSoft
Release Date: NOW PC CD $42

'GIRLFRIEND DONNA' With your new girlfriend game, you can get to talk to one of the cutest women in the world IN PLAIN ENGLISH! Our game features and artificial intelligence breakthrough. Watch her respond like a real woman.

Treasure Chest
Release Date: NOW PC CD $49

'STRIP POKER PROFESSIONAL VOL. 2' combines the action of 5 Card Draw with some very different table stakes, 4 gorgeous opponents who are willing & able to bet it all for the chance to beat the pants off you!

Art Worx
Release Date: NOW CD $39

'JADE PALACE' Animated with mind boggling 3D environments, you must save our beautiful damsel in distress by finding the missing jade and defeating the evil wizard. Enjoy heart-stopping rewards along the way.

Tour de Force
Release Date: NOW PC CD $19

'HOLLYWOOD BODY DOUBLE' You will be in total control over Shelly Michellel and her beautiful co-stars in a dozen full screen erotic locations where your imagination can run wild. You choose the camera angle and close up lenses and escort your stars to the private penthouse where the action begins.

Paradigm
Release Date: NOW PC CD $39

COMPUTER GAMES: SIMULATION

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A10 Tank Killr 2 W95	NOW	$48	F16 Fightng Falcon	08/97	$48	Microsoft FS 6 W95	NOW	$53	Super Motocross	09/97	$33
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AH-64D Longbow Gld	NOW	$46	Falcon 4.0	08/97	$52	Mwarrior 2 Battlepk	NOW	$48	Test Drive: Off Road	NOW	$39
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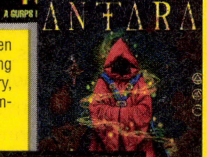

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Imperium Galactica

Conquer the galaxy… Junior?

Two of the most popular forms of strategy gaming currently in vogue are space empire games and real-time strategy games; current counts here at *CGS+* include about 14 of the former and over 40 of the latter either just released or due out within a year. With both kinds of games so popular, it's not surprising that someone would try to combine the two; *Imperium Galactica* is one of several such combinations, and one that does a decent job despite some serious flaws that hurt long-term gameplay.

The game cleverly mixes a storyline with a graduated learning approach. Early events teach you the basics of colony management and combat; with each promotion a new layer of complexity is added on, from more ships and planets to production, research, and diplomacy duties. It's an excellent way to slowly increase the complexity for gamers new to the genre, and helps to build anticipation for old-hands – early on it's hard to stop playing because you just *have* to get that next rank to see what awaits you. Unfortunately the design is such that the events are canned; they'll pretty much happen the same way each time, so if you want to play again or restart the game, you'll slog through the same cheesy little videos and crises. Even if you reach Grand Admiral (when the game opens up into a pure empire-builder; by now the story and canned events have run their course) replayability is poor; the stars are in the same positions, and you play the same race – no *Master of Orion*-like replayability here.

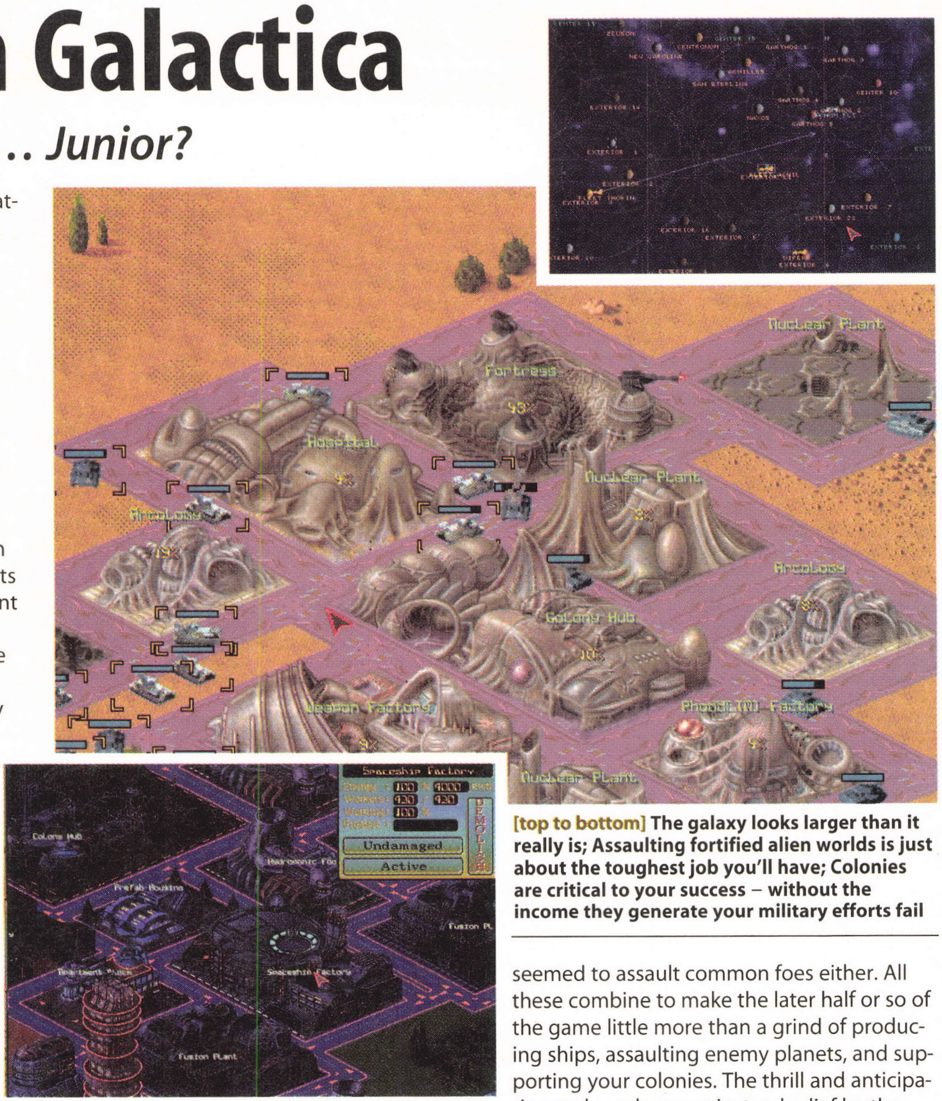
Colony management, research, and production are all important parts of building your military power, and are all fairly easy to accomplish. While the game is played in real-time you can freeze the action at any point, making control of even a massive 70 planet empire relatively painless. You can navigate the mostly well-thought-out interface screens easily using either the mouse or keyboard shortcuts, and the graphics throughout are quite nice. Hard-core space emperors might be disappointed by the simple research and production trees, but they work well for *Imperium Galactica*.

Tactical combat, either in space or ground assaults, is also real-time (luckily the galactic clock stops while the battles are fought out). As with the strategic modes, you can pause at any time to issue orders to your ships or ground units. Gameplay-wise combat is a weak cousin to *Command & Conquer*, especially towards the end of the game where the massive size of fleets or ground forces create traffic jams, causing you to pretty much throw forces into the fray with little strategizing possible. Selecting units can also be difficult; lassoing a group of ships or tanks sometimes takes two or three tries, something that's *very* frustrating in the heat of battle.

While the game is initially quite addictive, things fall apart shortly after reaching Grand Admiral rank. Design flaws let you use one of two "strategies" (cheats?) to easily overcome the computer: you can either instantly teleport forces from your galactic inventory to an endangered planet, or you can pull a Macarthur-like "I shall return" move: leave all your planets completely undefended; when the enemy assaults, simply move a well-equipped fleet in to retake the planet. The computer may take a few planets in a row, but you can just as easily retake them. You can also wait just outside orbit of an enemy planet, waiting for its fleet to leave before performing an assault; I can't recall a fleet-on-fleet battle I didn't initiate once reaching Admiral. Diplomacy seems of little use beyond bribing other races to be friendly; they may not assault you, but they never seemed to assault common foes either. All these combine to make the later half or so of the game little more than a grind of producing ships, assaulting enemy planets, and supporting your colonies. The thrill and anticipation early on become instead relief by the time you've finished the game; at this point you don't care that there's little replay value.

Be warned: this is a finicky DOS program; when they say it needs 550K of free base RAM and tell you not to run it from Windows 95, they mean it. Once I tweaked a DOS boot and updated my DOS CD-ROM drivers, though, I had no problem running the game.

Overall, *Imperium Galalctica* is a good introduction to the "4X" genre for those coming from the action/strategy side of gaming and is (early on at least) a fun diversion for the old hands. Even with the slowdown later in the game, you do want to finish it. If you want depth, complexity, or replayability, you'll probably want to pass, but if you want a simple space empire game then this – with caveats in mind – may be what you are looking for. *–Scott Udell*



[top to bottom] The galaxy looks larger than it really is; Assaulting fortified alien worlds is just about the toughest job you'll have; Colonies are critical to your success – without the income they generate your military efforts fail

★★★☆☆

Imperium Galactica
GT Interactive • www.gtinteractive.com • Requirements: DOS, 100MHz 486 or higher, 8MB of RAM (16MB if run from Windows 95), 4X CD-ROM

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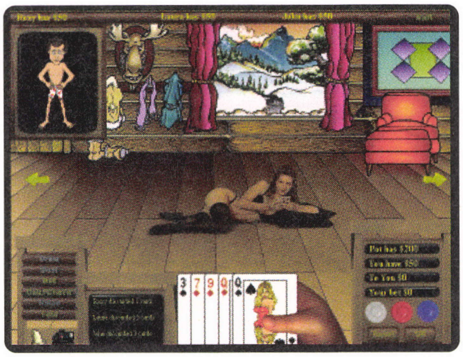

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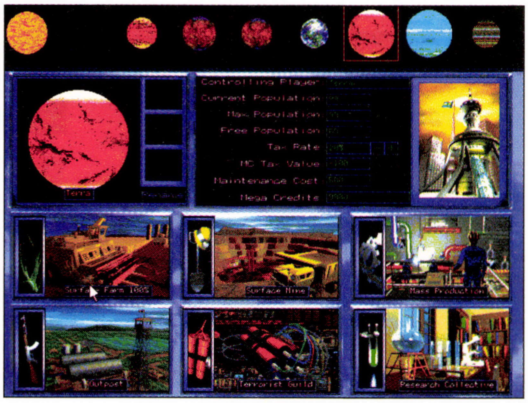
Into The Void

The latest 4X challenger falls short

"Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of clones," might have shouted Playmates Interactive in launching *Into the Void*. And with that launch comes another challenge to the venerable benchmarks of the space empire building genre such as *Master of Orion* (*MOO*) and *MOO2*. But is it worth playing, and to whom?



A fully developed home world

The answer depends on what you're looking for. All the genre's major pieces are represented, providing some unique and interesting aspects of interstellar expansion. Players can test their galactic exploration and conquest skills against up to 9 other players who can e-mail, network, or be represented by the AI in turn-based play. Options include the number of other players, the size of the universe, the star density within that universe, and the turn limit.

Each player has a choice among your basic worker, warrior, rabbit-like reproductive, scientist, spy, and diplomat races. Each starts with one planet with population near maximum and possessing starting surface technology in the six basic areas of planetary activity: agriculture, mining, production, intelligence operations, and research.

Success depends on your ability to expand the tax base relative to the competition. It's represented by population points assigned to work in one of the six planetary activities. The empire's tax base/population is increased by colonizing more planets and increasing population capacity of held planets through ever-more-advanced agriculture structures. The more people that work, the more that can pay taxes and the more tax capital the empire has to spend on ships, additional planetary surface structures, and technological upgrades to existing structures.

In addition to paying taxes, population points are moved back and forth among the six planetary activities depending on the player's need. The agricultural structure is usually fully staffed to allow maximum population, as is the research structure to discover advanced technologies, and the intelligence structure to do unto others before they do unto you. Any short-fall in population is moved among the mines, military, and production activities as the player has need.

One of those needs is for ships to explore, colonize, defend, and invade new systems and planets. Ship capability is a function of technology and hull size. Combat is allowed when an enemy ship or ships begin the turn within range of a friendly ship or group of ships. The combat outcome depends on the attacker's range and offensive strength compared to the defender's evasiveness and defensive strength.

Okay, so great, but is it worth playing? The interface is not all that it might be in that eachturn is somewhere between a click-fest and clickathon in keeping all population actively employed, intelligence operations sustained, and ships within range of the enemy. Two tutorials help offset woefully inadequate documentation. The system/galaxy layered map system is a good feature, and a twist on interstellar travel is new, but the rest of the design does little to advance genre standards.

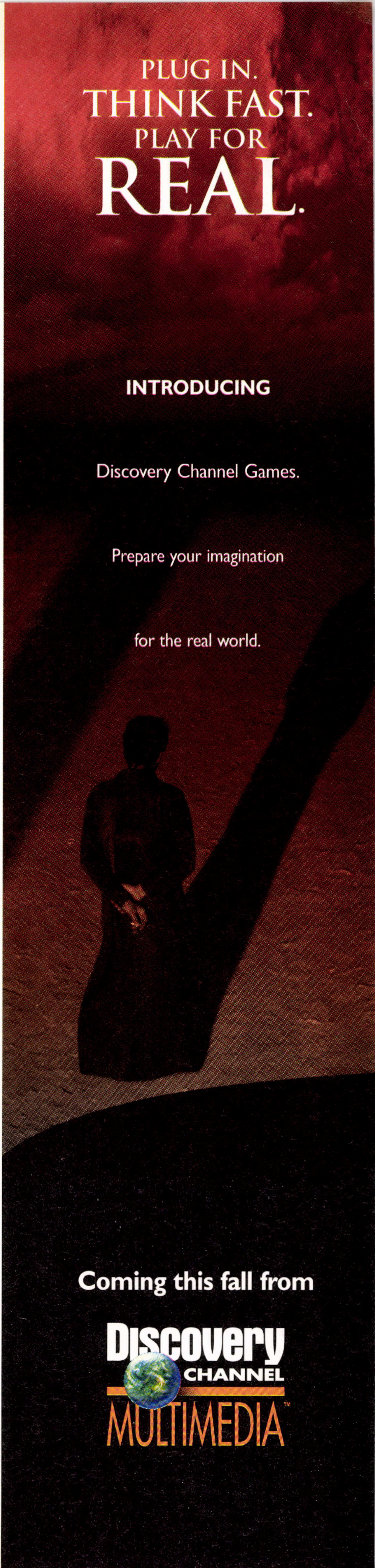
The combat system is especially disappointing in that the enemy always has the option to move away before being engaged unless they begin the turn within range. In one instance an enemy transport was chased around the same system for 30 turns without once being engaged for a result–not exactly pulse-pounding action. It might be possible with advanced weapons technology to station ships at regular intervals throughout a system so that at least one group could engage an enemy regardless of their starting position, but who wants to? Then there's the game crashing bug caused by splitting up a ship group after sending another to meet it.

So who should play *Into the Void*? Anyone with an abiding love for space empire building games, lots of time, and a desire to explore another clone. Who shouldn't play it? Anyone with a limited amount of time and an interest in spending what little time they have on genre classics. *–Jim Lowerre*

★★⯪☆☆

Into The Void

Playmates Interactive Entertainment • www.playmatestoys.com/piehome.htm • Requirements: DOS, 486, 8MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-10 players, LAN, PBEM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Magic the Gathering

How to cast spells and influence peons

Chapter One: The Induction

When he first came to, Wizard Wygg gaped in shock at this strange world around him. He vaguely remembered making a mad dash towards the blue light special in the loafers aisle, followed by a blinding flash of light.

As he rubbed his eyes, he saw by his side several arcane cards and a pouch of coins. He would have contemplated further, had not the growls of a creature in the underbrush jarred him from his stunned state. With barely enough time to gather his things, Wygg scurried forward, monster in pursuit, to a nearby town.

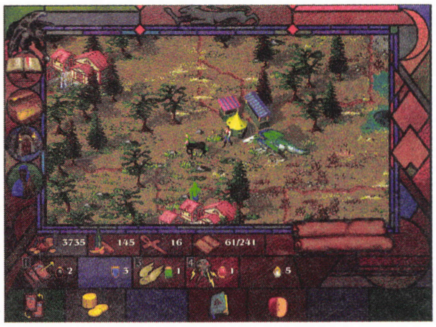
Perhaps from intelligence, or more likely blind luck, Wygg thumbed through his cards in town to sell off ones that were inappropriate for a young wizard. Purchasing food enough to feed his hunger, it wasn't long before he realized that this place, called Shandalar, was teeming with monsters, preying on towns and sojourners. It seemed every town had a problem that only his infantile skills could solve.

As Wygg began his journey through the land, he was routinely pounced upon by creatures more powerful than he. Familiarity with his cards helped him win some battles, and the cards he pillaged from the remains of his opponents were either assimilated into the deck, or sold for cash to buy food and cards he'd need. The losing monsters often begged for mercy, with promises of clues to mysterious dungeons filled with treasures, but the budding wizard was too weak to fancy the notion of a dungeon, so he almost always chose the cards.

Despite occasional victories, Wygg remained precariously feeble, losing frequently against the hordes that roamed the land. As he glumly sat in a tavern pondering how long he'd last in Shandalar, a kindly old wizard came up to sit beside him.

"I've been watching you, friend, and I must say those are some pretty fine loafers you're wearing. Truth is, they're too good to lose, so listen up to what I say."

"Creatures," he continued, "are bound by the forces of nature that summon them. If you must escape a fight, run hurriedly for a different terrain. The creatures will be powerless to follow. Judging from your listlessness, it's clear you are not a native Shandalarian sorcerer. The wizards in each town have epic tales to tell. In truth, they're dry, boring wives tales, but you must visit them anyway. They will offer mana links to increase your life. In return, they'll most likely ask for a favor; don't turn them away. Most importantly, boy, don't get all starry eyed with big fancy cards. Buy only what your deck can use, and don't just buy because of the pretty pictures. Now off with you... and good luck."



3735
145
16
61/241

Stalked by powerful foes, Wygg is forced to leave the carnival without riding the Ferris wheel

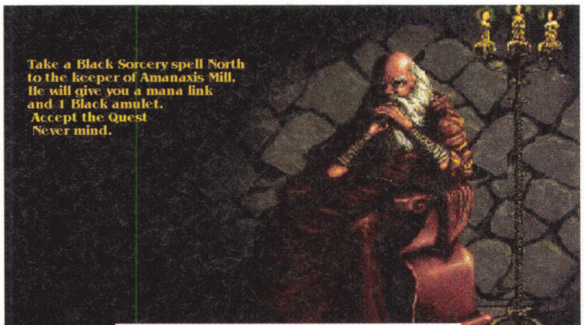
Wygg started off the stool, and took one last glance towards the ale bar. "What's your name, sir?"

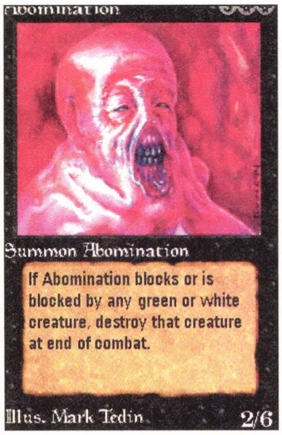
The wizardss eyes glistened, and an imperceptible smile came to his lips.

"Glint. Glint Eastwind. But you can call me… Tim."

Chapter Two: Trial by Fire

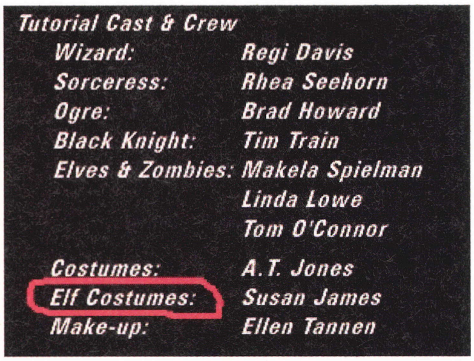
Weeks went by, and Wygg grew stronger, and wiser. The old man's advice had paid well, as he scoured through towns gaining


Take a Black Sorcery spell North
to the keeper of Amanaxis Mill.
He will give you a mana link
and 1 Black amulet.
Accept the Quest
Never mind.

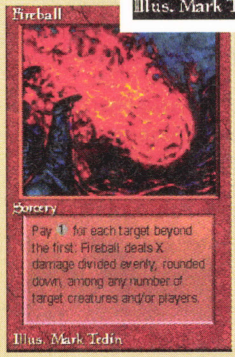


Abomination
Summon Abomination
Illus. Mark Tedin
2/6

If Abomination blocks or is blocked by any green or white creature, destroy that creature at end of combat.

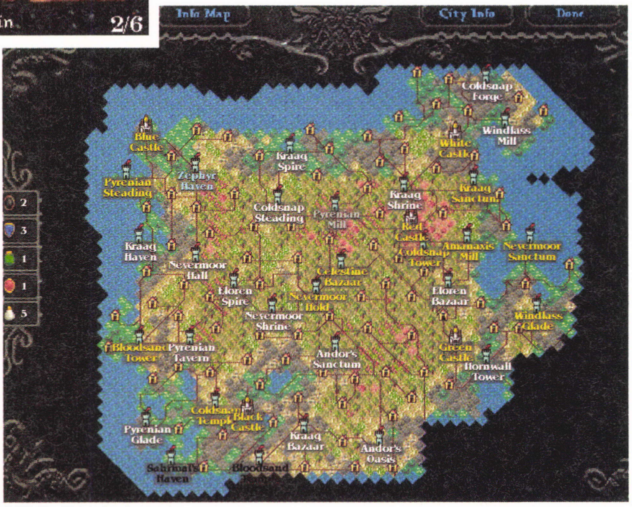

Tutorial Cast & Crew

Wizard:	Regi Davis
Sorceress:	Rhea Seehorn
Ogre:	Brad Howard
Black Knight:	Tim Train
Elves & Zombies:	Makela Spielman Linda Lowe Tom O'Connor
Costumes:	A.T. Jones
Elf Costumes:	Susan James
Make-up:	Ellen Tannen



Fireball
Sorcery
Illus. Mark Tedin

Pay 1 for each target beyond the first. Fireball deals X damage divided evenly, rounded down, among any number of target creatures and/or players.



Info Map
City Info
Done
Coldsnap Forge
Windlass Mill
Blue Castle
White Castle
Kraaq Spire
Zephyr Haven
Pyrenian Steading
Kraaq Shrine
Kraaq Sanctum
Coldsnap Steading
Pyrenian Mill
Red Castle
Coldsnap Tower
Amanaxis Mill
Nevermoor Sanctum
Kraaq Haven
Nevermoor Hall
Floren Spire
Nevermoor Hold
Floren Bazaar
Nevermoor Shrine
Windlass Glade
Bloodsand Tower
Pyrenian Haven
Andor's Sanctum
Green Castle
Hornwall Tower
Coldsnap Temple
Black Castle
Pyrenian Glade
Kraaq Bazaar
Andor's Oasis
Sabriona's Haven
Bloodsand

[clockwise from top left] Hey, buddy, ever hear of a magic spell called... "Smile?" Seriously, his offer of a mana link is crucial to your success; Before Arzakon turned to the Dark Side, he was a pretty snazzy guy (as seen here in his high school yearbook); As Wygg checked the credits, he saw clearly the reason for the elves' low self esteem (and low life points); Be aware of your surroundings at all times. There's nothing worse than failing a quest because you zigged when ya shoulda zagged; As a late duel tactic, very little can withstand the might of a highly pumped Fireball; The lovely Serra. She was a card sought by many, yet she loved only Wygg

quests. Most of the town elders offered amulets, but Wygg knew the time for precious trinkets would be later, and so he took only quests that offered mana links or cards that would be useful. His tome of cards grew as well, though his natural instincts to keep every card had to be quelled.

The mystery of the land soon faded into understanding as Wygg learned to use the terrain to his advantage. The swamps were treacherous for slowing him down, and he found it painfully easy to get stuck traveling along the shore's edge. It didn't take long until he learned to stay at least partly inland so as not to be trapped between hunting predators and the impassable waters. Whenever creatures pursued him that were best avoided, a quick dash for a different terrain served to stave off their hungry souls thirsting for the blood of a young wizard.

He also learned the value of trading cards in areas of Shandalar that valued them. Swamp cards were sold for a higher value in towns that weren't surrounded by swamps, for example. It worked in reverse as well, as cards he sought to augment his current decks were found to vary dramatically in price from place to place.

Duel after duel, Wygg challenged the opponents, and as he established mana links from neighboring villages and towns, he found enemies were becoming stronger as well. It was an honorable world, and even the foulest of denizens would reward him should he excel in battle. For this reason, he almost always chose to play his cards first, rather than draw first, when he won the toss of the coin during duels. He knew that victory of itself ensured a card or two, but an overwhelming victory so impressed his opponents that their homage always took the form of additional and exotic cards, amulets, or special gifts in future battles.

Some of the creatures instigated mischievous chicanery. Others possessed ominous abilities ranging from increased speed while traversing their native land type to cards that were instantly in play during any duel. Particularly devastating, the Winged Stallions that roamed in search of a fight enjoyed teleporting the hapless hero to an unknown destination. Though a nuisance under normal conditions, in one case Wygg found himself too far from a town desperately pleading for his help in ridding their village of menacing foes. The cold eyes of the villagers showed fiery scorn upon his return, and he was never again allowed another quest in the village.

Chapter Three: Divine Transformation

Wygg's reputation grew as his victories grew. Lesser creatures that once terrorized him through every trek now cowered in fear, begging him for mercy and running away. By now, their pitiful existence meant little, so he played this to his advantage, rarely pursuing them. Other creatures more sinister than they awaited for his justice to be executed. Whatever magical means by which he arrived in Shandalar, he had forever interwoven its destiny with his.

After a particularly vicious duel with a roving Paladin, an event happened to change his life, once again, forever. There she stood, no longer enslaved by her master. Her name was Serra, and the two soon fell madly in love. Wygg had waited years to find a girl who didn't tap when attacking. From then on they fought together, side by side. She taught him how to tailor his decks to most effectively work against particular creatures' weaknesses, and how to listen for the telltale sounds of the different creatures as they approached.

Most importantly, she showed him a trick he used time and again. When a village quest asked for delivery of a certain card type, she always had him stop off at a nearby town, temporarily remove all cards of the requested type other than one he was willing to part with, and then continue on to town, whereby the villagers would still happily reward Wygg, and he never lost a card he cherished.

Towns were buzzing with rumors of ancient spells that Wygg found both fascinating and interesting. These WorldMagics were sought after by the local conjurers, but few carried the mental stamina to possess these awesome spells. Most interesting was a special power that allowed Wygg to change his ante card, the card he'd give up should he lose the coming battle. Some were less useful, like the WorldMagic that, for a chance of losing an amulet, destroyed the nearest creature. More often than not, packs of creatures hunted Wygg, so this particular magic didn't interest him. Most of these powerful magics were useful, but not critical to his journeys.

Chapter Four: The Reckoning Prelude

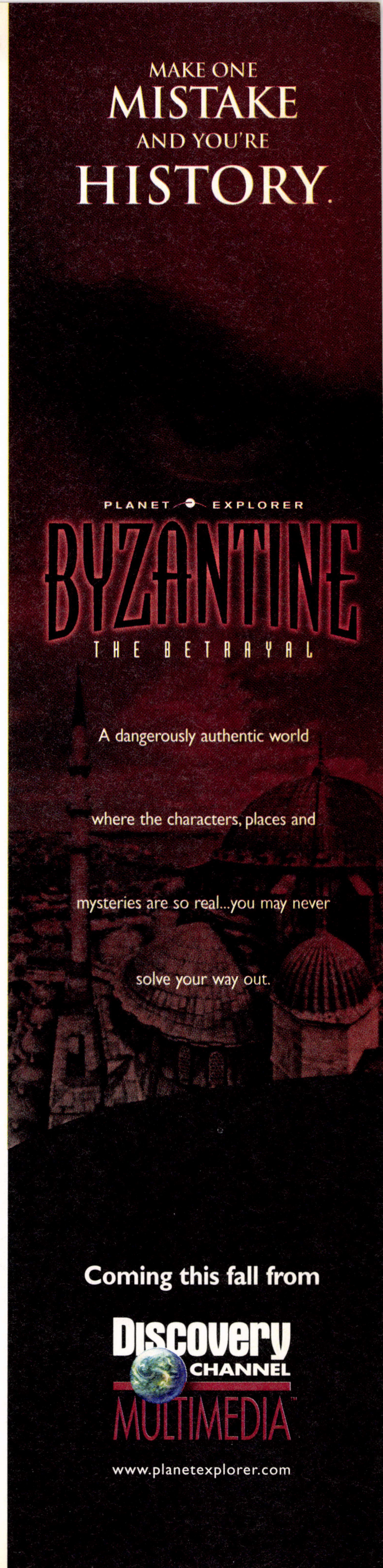
Wygg's prowess in battle did not go unnoticed, and as his reputation grew, so did alarm among the five minions of the tyrant Arzakon. One day, while traveling across the mountains towards a castle in search of WorldMagics, a mighty Prismat appeared out of nowhere. Summoned by the minions to subdue this nuisance once and for all, Wygg watched in horror as his precious Serra was placed before them as a bounty. If only he had found the WorldMagic to swap his treasured partner for another card.

"My lords have sent me to test your dueling prowess," the dragon rumbled. "Perhaps a duel with a *real* opponent will show them they've overestimated your puny arcane powers."

The battle raged on through the day, but the dragon's superior cards and deadly three colors of spells couldn't be overcome by the wizard's valiant effort. In that dark hour, Wygg realized how weak he still was.

"No!" He yelled helplessly, watching the dragon take flight with the terrified Serra in its talons. "The masters will enjoy this prize of yours," its voice growled from the air. "They'll be more than pleased to know you're no threat to them. Nice loafers, though."

"Oh, I'm a threat all right," he uttered towards an empty sky through clenched teeth. "You'll see... you'll see."



MAKE ONE
MISTAKE
AND YOU'RE
HISTORY.

PLANET EXPLORER
BYZANTINE
THE BETRAYAL

A dangerously authentic world
where the characters, places and
mysteries are so real...you may never
solve your way out.

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Chapter Five: Haunted

All around him, the forest was alive with the newness of Spring. Birds chirped, woodchucks chucked, and the townsfolk went about their business under the bright rays of the midday suns. But Wygg didn't care. With his precious Serra stripped from him by the five wizards, only thoughts of revenge filled his mind. Though the road would be long, he vowed to banish Arzakon from the plains of Shandalar forever. Wygg knew, though, that soon the five wizards would send all manner of summoned creatures to hunt him. He didn't care. He knew what to do.

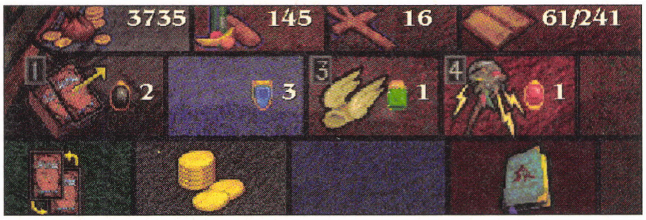
Earlier, he'd used tactics to dash towards a different terrain type to avoid confrontations with enemies. Now, he knew that the stronger creatures of the land could easily cross two or three different types. Anytime he saw a flying creature, he knew there was no escape save the WorldMagic he possessed which would give him a magical burst of speed to outdistance foes.

Whether chance or destiny, on the way to a nearby village Wygg met up with Glint Eastwind, the kindly wizard whose advice shortly upon entering Shandalar had all but saved his life. After relaying the tales of his journey, Glint scratched his beard, and after pondering for a moment spoke.

"I can see from the color in your cheeks you've collected mana links to strengthen your life. Good. Continue to search for quests to gain more. You'll never have too many. Ever."

"I see Serra has taught you the value of adapting your decks to your foe's weakness. Remember, your decks are weapons to be ever sharpened. Towns and villages only carry what cards will keep you alive. It's time, Wygg, for you to conquer the vile dungeons. Hone your skills for facing the minions of Arzakon."

"The amulets you once thought frivolous? They're your greatest bargaining chip, Wygg. Tell the pompous wizards in towns and villages you'll do their silly quests, until you've obtained enough amulets to purchase cards at the wizards' towers throughout the land." And with that, Glint vanished just as quickly as he'd come.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1

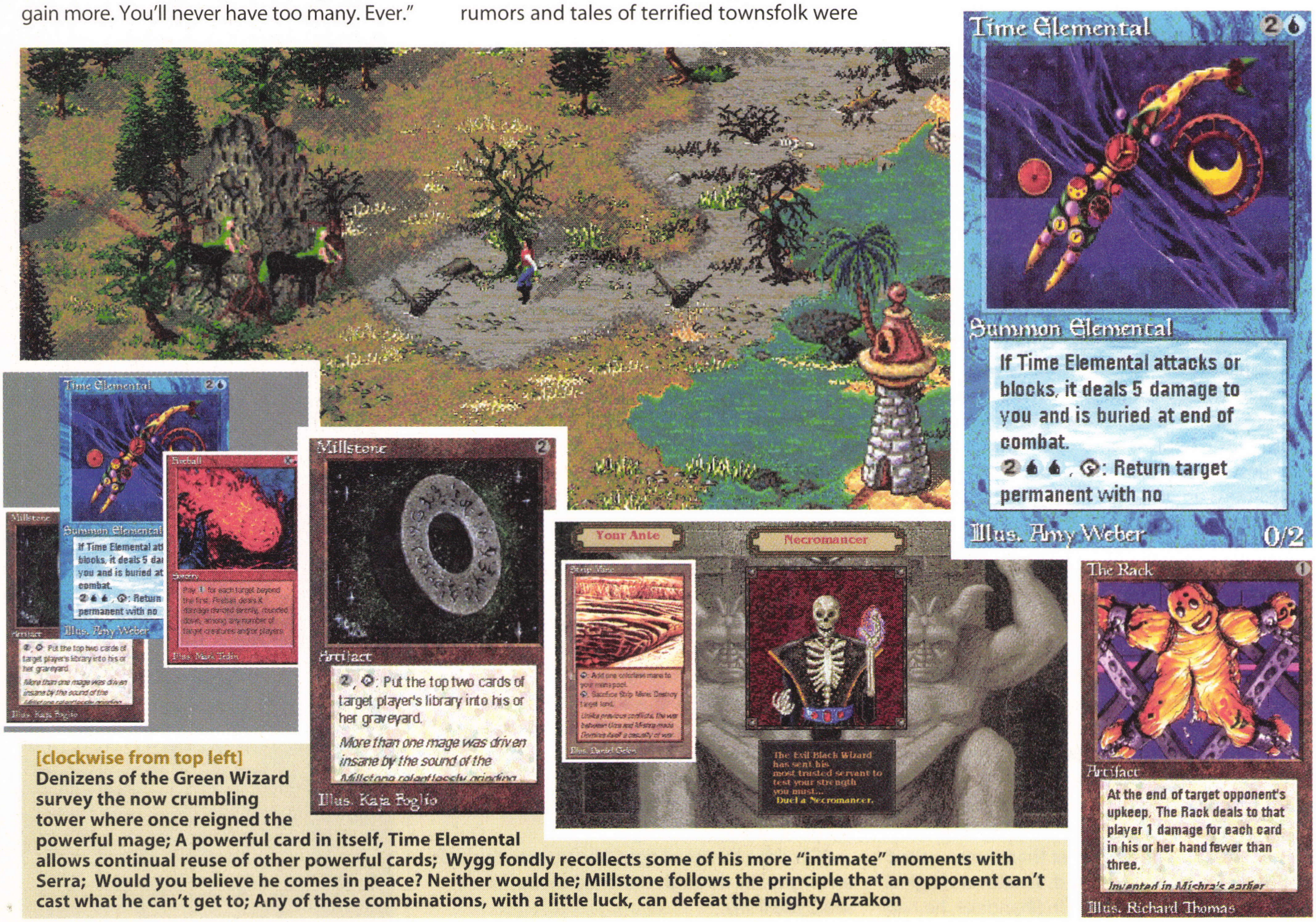
As the game progresses, money is plentiful and amulets become of primary importance

Chapter Six: Heart of the catacombs

Days turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months. Relentlessly pursued by all manner of foes, Wygg grew stronger, and his hard-fought victories netted tremendous spoils. By selling off cards, he found himself rich with gold, yet poor in spirit. Only the return of Serra into his arms would quench the fires of rage within him.

Shortly after his visit with Glint, Wygg entered the first of many dungeons. The rumors and tales of terrified townsfolk were grossly exaggerated, as he found them far less ominous from the inside. Many of the creatures were barred from movement, making it easy to by-pass them completely. Almost all of the dungeons had special abilities in play (most often, Wygg found his life failed to be restored between battles). Even without clearing the dungeon, treasures of gold, amulets, and otherwise unattainable cards littered the cobbled floors. Only when direly needed cards were at stake did it become necessary to completely rid the dungeon of its bestial inhabitants.

As the seasons changed, so did Wygg. Once an apprentice with barely the strength to survive, his hardened visage never looked away from the castles of the five wizards. His piercing eyes held telltale signs of an epic clash that would rock the foundations of Shandalar. The time had come. The wizards awaited.


Time Elemental
2
Summon Elemental
If Time Elemental attacks or blocks, it deals 5 damage to you and is buried at end of combat.
2 ◆ ◆, ⟳: Return target permanent with no
Illus. Amy Weber
0/2
Fireball
Millstone
2
Artifact
2, ⟳: Put the top two cards of target player's library into his or her graveyard.
More than one mage was driven insane by the sound of the Millstone relentlessly grinding
Illus. Kaja Foglio
Your Ante
Necromancer
Strip Mine
Illus. Daniel Gelon
The Evil Black Wizard has sent his most trusted servant to test your strength you must...
Duel a Necromancer.
The Rack
1
Artifact
At the end of target opponent's upkeep, The Rack deals to that player 1 damage for each card in his or her hand fewer than three.
Invented in Mishra's earlier
Illus. Richard Thomas

[clockwise from top left] Denizens of the Green Wizard survey the now crumbling tower where once reigned the powerful mage; A powerful card in itself, Time Elemental allows continual reuse of other powerful cards; Wygg fondly recollects some of his more "intimate" moments with Serra; Would you believe he comes in peace? Neither would he; Millstone follows the principle that an opponent can't cast what he can't get to; Any of these combinations, with a little luck, can defeat the mighty Arzakon

Chapter Seven: Ducks in a row

The Green Wizard: The first tower steps he climbed were those of the Green Tower. After all, it was the Green Wizard's minion that snatched Serra from his arms. Fighting through the few underlings that barred his way, Wygg stared eye to eye with Morgane. Not a word was spoken as the duel escalated. Morgane's deck possessed many forms of mana generation, and though few creatures were found among his cards, any one could be pumped up to extraordinary strengths.

Morgane never had a chance. His scheme unraveled in the face of smaller creatures momentarily pumped with instants, and all his life regaining spells resting on the bottom of his deck. With the flick of a hand, Wygg uttered the incantation to banish Morgane shortly after relieving his rival's deck of a few choice cards.

The White Wizard: Traveling northward brought him to the foot of the White Wizard's castle. The Sainted One, though inwardly disconcerted to see this thorn of a man, calmly shuffled his deck with no outward signs of fear. Crippling Armageddon Time Clocks kept Wygg at bay, fending off its looming damage. With the White Wizard's own protection against artifact damage, there was precious little room for error. Only a timely Disenchant changed the tide of battle. The White Wizards creatures were powerful, but scarce. Red direct damage spells took a heavy toll, and creatures damaged The Sainted One for several turns. Wygg breathed a sigh of relief as the White Wizard finally succumbed to that determined band of creatures.

The Black Wizard: The towns surrounding the black castle told tales of hideous flying creatures hovering around the castle's walls. With that premonition, Wygg tailored his deck a bit differently, and flung himself into the ghastly hordes within black castle.

The LichLord unleashed all manner of foul airborne creatures. Capitalizing on a hunch from the nearby town's tales, Wygg stacked his deck with Hurricanes and several Grapeshot Catapults to knock the flying foes right out of the sky. Victory would not come so easily, especially after a Lord of the Pit came thundering from the Black Wizards hand. Luckily, a Sorceress Queen turned the filthy beast into an 0/2 creature, and with a well-timed strike to knock out creatures to feed it, the Lord turned on its master. With a narrow victory secured, Wygg sent the Black Wizard went howling into the void.

The Red Wizard: Having dispatched what he considered the easier of the wizards, Wygg paused to consider the Dragon Lord's strengths. With her lust for power unquenched on any realm, he logically concluded that he'd face powerful creatures and powerful spells. The key to victory lay in one seemingly forgotten rule: the price of great power is great cost.

Sure enough, she armed herself with vile, horrifying and powerful creatures. Calmly, Wygg threw out bog imps, scryb sprites, and killer bees, powering them beyond their original strength with Giant Growth and Howl From Beyond. By the time the red wizard's vicious troops were summoned, a cockatrice and Will-o-the-Wisp stood ready and up to the task of holding them back. Of all the memories Wygg would have of Shandalar, none would be more vivid than the shrieks of terror from the Dragon Lord as she was wrenched towards the nether void forever.

The Blue Wizard: Having dreaded the Blue Wizard's ability to stifle any strategy with a well-placed counterspell, Wygg nonetheless faced the final pawn in his noble quest. He was startled to find the wizard quite ill following the loss of his companions. All through his battles, he'd thought only of survival. Now, he sensed victory within his grasp.

In the end, he needn't have worried. The Astral Visionary's deck was weakly constructed. The entire deck hinged on Stasis, and with his single casting cost white creatures, he ultimately prevailed life point by life point. No sooner had he won than Wygg felt his being torn from the fabric of his surroundings. Flung through the swirling gasses between physical worlds, he landed roughly on the cold, dank floor of the mighty Arzakon's chambers.

Chapter Eight: Revenge

Before him, the shadow of Arzakon himself paced back and forth, his eyes never straying from Wygg's. His booming voice rattled the chamber.

"Commendable effort, mortal. My five were none too strong for you. Banish me, if you will. But remember, I'll be taking a certain treasure of yours with me."

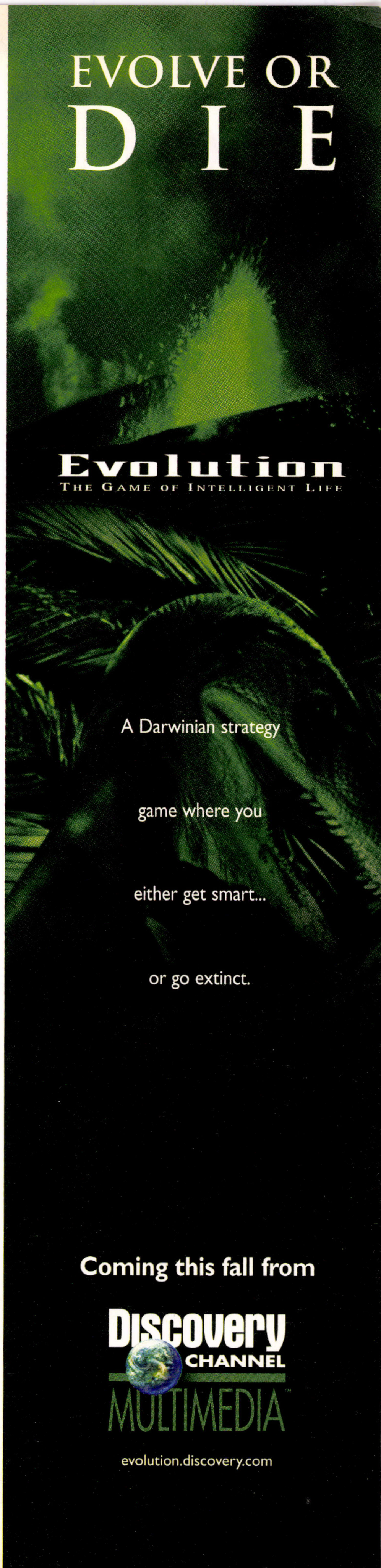
Wygg scanned across the room to see his Serra bound and chained, her eyes pleading for freedom. A sneer came to his lips, and he screamed at Arzakon, "No banishment, wizard. It's all or nothing. You or me."

"Fool!" yelled Arzakon. "I'll take your challenge. Prepare to reap my fury."

Wygg quickly switched to his deck built just for this moment, though the odds were severely against him. Luck shone down on him, and in short order he had locked out the powerful wizard with Time Elemental, Stasis, Kismet, and his own Feldon's Canes. With his cards gone and the duel lost, Arzakon crumbled into dust before the feet of his opponent, and the magical bonds holding Serra were released. In triumph, Wygg pulled her into his arms, moving his lips to hers....

"Sir!" A voice jolted Wiggins into reality. A very unhappy clerk stood before him. "Sir, I'm going to have to ask you to leave if you keep kissing that mannequin. Now get down off there."

Wiggins stared out at the sea of faces in the shoe department, but he couldn't escape the eyes of his children and spouse. On the way to the car with their packages, he could only mumble incoherently as his wife asked, *"who's Sarah?" –Tim Royal*



Cheat Thrills

Ruining the multiplayer experience

◀ **Interstate 76: My beloved Leprechaun, before the "encounter"**

▼ **Diablo: Blizzard's latest has been the biggest target for cheaters**

CHAR
QUESTS
MAP
MENU
INV
SPELLS
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

BOUNTIFUL STAFF OF FLAME WAV
DAMAGE: 4-8 DUR: 35/35
CHARGES: 105/105
EXTRA CHARGES
REQUIRED: 54 MAG

If I ever meet the little punk that wasted my beautiful V-10 Gremlin (excuse me, Leprechaun) in what has now become my last Internet game of *Interstate '76*, I'm going to pop the little cretin upside the head. You see, I was having a good old time mixing it up with fellow netizens when I met up with this netwit. I knew something was wrong when I kept firing bullets at the little spaz and he never took any damage. Then the news broke on the Usenet – the file format of the cars was easily hackable, and gamers were giving themselves unlimited armor and weapons. Thank you very much – you ruined my game and are forcing me to abandon multiplayer gaming.

Welcome to the brave new world of online cheating, where anyone armed with a hex editor can modify their games. Activision has, at press time, announced plans to deal with cheating on *Interstate '76*; however, the main focus on cheating has been on *battle.net*, Blizzard Entertainment's free server for *Diablo*. With programs like *TownKill* floating around to ruin players' games, Blizzard has had to spend weeks at a time, with three full-time programmers, to "break" the cheats. According to Blizzard's Bill Roper, "We're doing what we can to break the cheats, because it's so hard to have to say, 'We can't put resources on it to fix it.'"

It's depressing to see Blizzard taking heat from users because they can't stop the cheating. Here's a company with perhaps the best record of supporting users (they created the CD-ROM "spawning" feature to let gamers play multiplayer with one copy of the game), one that doesn't feel it necessary to scream "oh, by the way, we're selling more games than anyone in the industry right now." But *Diablo*'s incredible popularity – it was the number one selling CD-ROM in January, eclipsing even Windows 95 and Turbo Tax – has made it a hacker magnet.

Gamers have to realize that by forcing companies to work on undoing hacks, you're pulling them from future products. Would you rather Activision be making *Interstate '76* cheat-proof, or would you like to see their next big-robot game *Heavy Gear* on time? *Diablo* could be made even more cheat-proof by going to a client-server model, but that would require a complete re-write of the program, which, according to Roper, would take over nearly a year of work (and it's not going to happen). More importantly, it could pull programmers from their upcoming *Starcraft* and, perhaps someday, *Warcraft III* or *Diablo II*.

You can make the argument that publishers should make their games more difficult to hack, and/or improve their servers, but in doing so they'd be encouraging even more hackers to try and be the first to succeed. The extra work required to make games and servers hack proof could encourage the companies to charge for the sites, something that Blizzard is adamant about *not* doing. In the long-term, the question will always be whether the extra sales, and the goodwill these free sites generate from users, are enough to pay the extra programmers' and site administrators' salaries.

The services have developed their own internal policing forces for dealing with cheating, and people concerned with cheating can always meet up with "friends" to play the games. However, having to plan out the game in advance ruins the whole, "hey, I'm gonna load up *Interstate '76* and kick some butt for the next 15 minutes while I wait for my Chinese food to arrive" idea that solo gaming allows.

There's a bunch of unquestionably talented people out there doing this sort of thing, and if they want to do this to ruin their own gaming experience, go for it. But don't ruin my experience. The solution to this problem is simple. If gamers don't feel the need to cheat, there will be no need for cheat programs. It's that simple. If we all play by the rules when we play online, companies can continue working on gameplay, rather than learning 128-bit encryption algorithms. *–Steve Bauman*

CHEATER

Outlaws

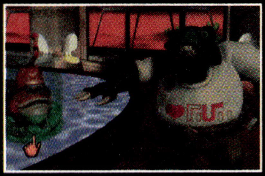
Type these codes at any time:

OLPOSTAL	All ammo and weapons
OLJACKPOT	All items
OLAIRHEAD	Flying (use <X> and <C>)
OLREDLITE	Enemies freeze
OLCDS	Full map
OLFPS	Shows frame rate
OLGPS	Shows coordinates on map
OLHIDEOUT	Level code
OLTOWN	Level code
OLTRAIN	Level code
OLCANYON	Level code
OLMILL	Level code
OLSIMMS	Level code
OLMINER	Level code
OLCLIFF	Level code
OLRANCH	Level code

These are definitely not the usual suspects.

THE SPACE BAR™

A “*what*-done-it” mystery adventure CD-ROM by Steve Meretzky.



Boffo Games Inc.
Rocket Science
SEGASOFT

WWW.THESPACEBAR.COM

Mac OS
Designed for Microsoft Windows 95
MATURE M AGES 17+ ESRB

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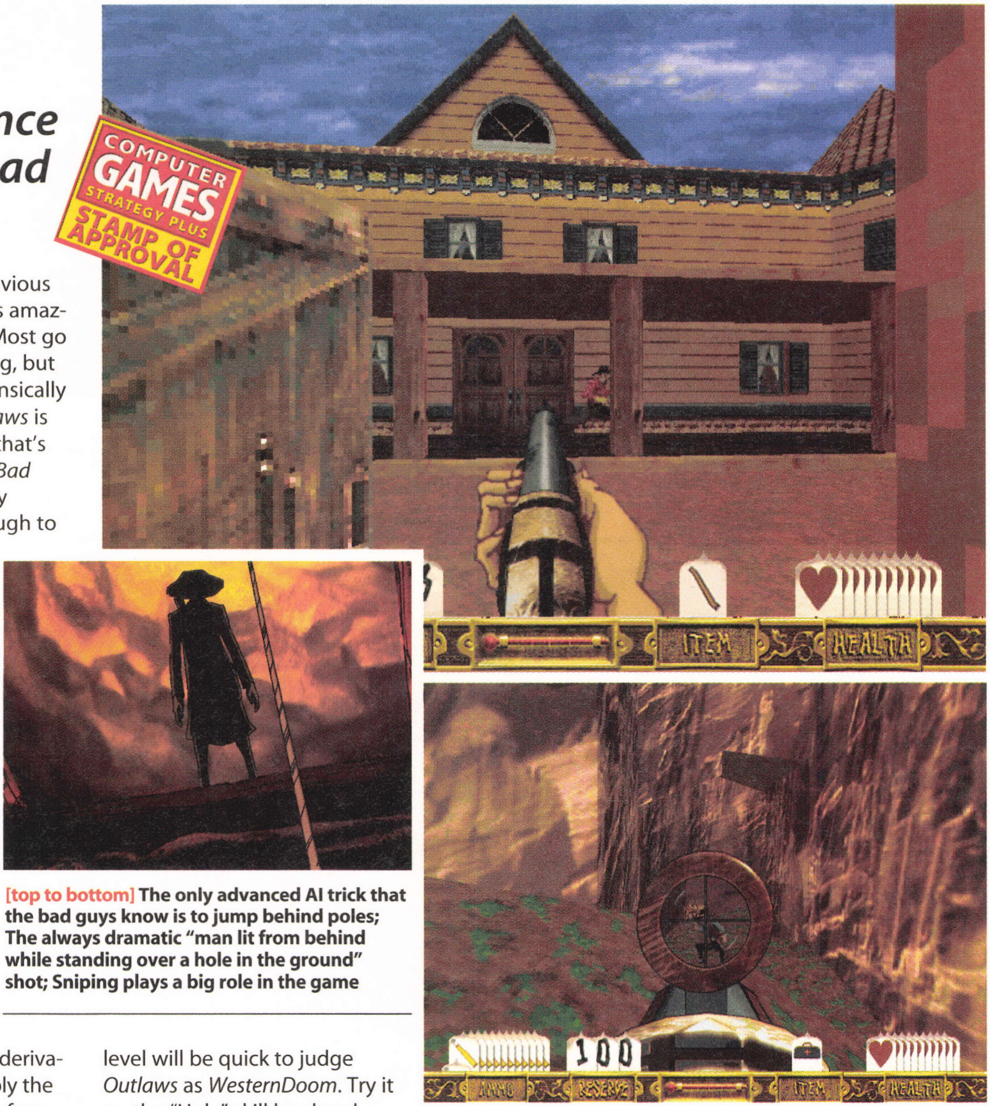
Outlaws

An excellent balance of the good, the bad and the ugly

COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS STAMP OF APPROVAL

The wild-wild-west is such an obvious setting for a 3D shooter that it's amazing no one's tried one before. Most go with the outer-space or fantasy setting, but what other era in history is more intrinsically linked to gunplay and violence? *Outlaws* is an evocative and superb 3D shooter that's equal parts *Doom* and *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly*. When it's good, it's really good. When it's bad, it's not bad enough to diminish its entertainment value. And when it's ugly, well… read on.

The good: *Outlaws* is one of the few 3D shooters that excels as a single and multiplayer game. There is much in *Outlaws* that will remind you of LucasArts' previous 3D shooter, *Dark Forces*. The level designs of *Outlaws* will constantly evoke memories of equivalent levels in that game. However, one look at the cut scenes that set up the story will eliminate all your memories of *Dark Forces*. They're so far beyond what anyone else is doing, quality-wise, that there's nothing on the market that compares. While the story, about an ex-Marshall looking for the killers of his wife and kidnappers of his child, is derivative in the extreme (which was probably the point), it is so professionally produced, from the voice-acting to the beautiful animation, that any criticisms become irrelevant. The same compliments are reserved for the Ennio Morricone-esque score, one that's good enough not to turn off.



[top to bottom] **The only advanced AI trick that the bad guys know is to jump behind poles; The always dramatic "man lit from behind while standing over a hole in the ground" shot; Sniping plays a big role in the game**

The bad: it's unfortunate that they didn't take the same care in creating enemy AI. The bad guys still don't react to things happening near them, allowing you to snipe someone from long-distance, then snipe the guy standing next to him because he's somehow failed to notice that his friend is dead. The first company that releases a 3D shooter that gets this aspect of the game right will have a certifiable smash on their hands.

The ugly: the graphics aren't exactly state-of-the-art, being more *Duke Nukem 3D* than *Quake*. Frame rates vary from machine to machine, but you can expect 10-15 frames-per-second on a 133MHz Pentium in high-resolution mode – as always, your mileage may vary. The game uses sprites like *Duke*, not the polygons of *Quake*, and they get extremely ugly at close range.

Gamers used to loading up a game and trying to finish it quickly on the lowest skill level will be quick to judge *Outlaws* as *WesternDoom*. Try it on the "Ugly" skill level and that comparison will be put to rest. Once you allow the player to be killed after one or two shots, and give them limited ammunition, you suddenly have an all-new gaming experience, one where stealth and sneaking is more important than outright speed. The weapons selections are fairly predictable, but having to press a key to load your weapon is a wonderful addition. There's nothing worse than breaking into a room full of people and realizing you forgot to load your gun.

As a multiplayer game, *Outlaws* is a perfect example of how to take a standard genre and make the online experience feel new and unique. Unlike other 3D shooters, there is no "rocket launcher" weapon that throws the game out of balance. Multiplayer *Outlaws*, either over a LAN or the Internet, is more of a hide and seek game, with limited ammo and weapons and the need to reload. All of these things combine to increase the tension of the multiplayer game, and do a lot to keep it from just being *WesternDoom*.

Aside from the usual deathmatch and team play, there are a couple of online games that spice up the action. These are the old standby Capture the Flag and Kill the Fool With the Chicken, which is a variant of the old schoolyard classic Smear the Non-politically-correct-term-for-one-who-prefers-same-sex-relationships. Over the Internet, the game played superbly with up to four players over the Internet Gaming Zone (www.zone.com). Whether this was LucasArts' or Microsoft's doing is for software engineers to debate.

Overall, it would be a surprise if any of the upcoming games based on *Duke Nukem 3D*'s Build engine were as good as *Outlaws*. Every 3D game should show as much thought in level and multiplayer design, proving once again that it's the gameplay, stupid. We don't need no stinkin' polygons or true 3D… we need fewer stinkin' designs. *–Steve Bauman*

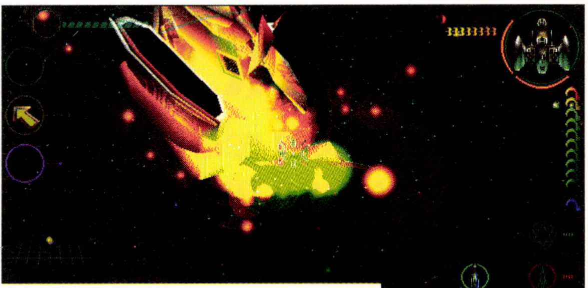
★★★★☆

Outlaws

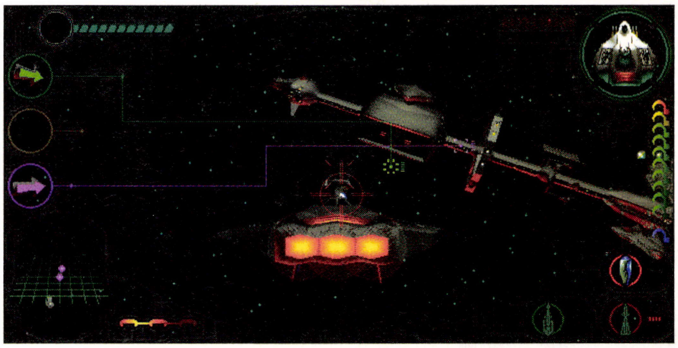
LucasArts Entertainment • www.lucasarts.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium, 16MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-8 players, LAN, Internet, modem, null modem

Darklight Conflict

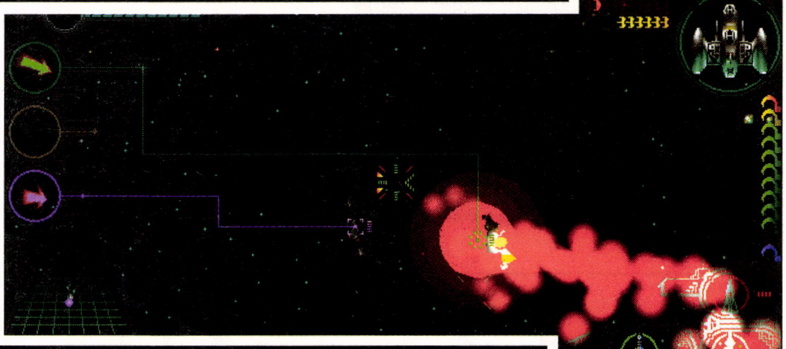
Not quite a great gaming experience



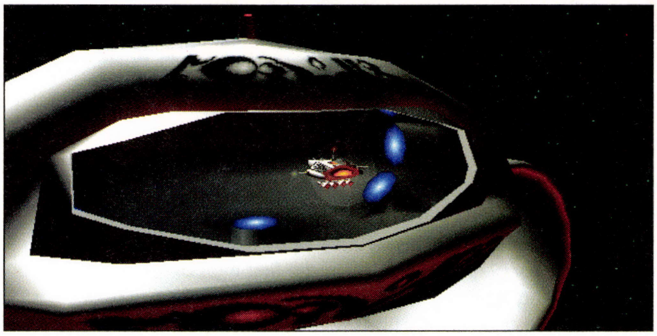
▲ Darklight Conflict's explosions are both brilliant and imposing. Don't get caught up in the debris storm from a capital ship or meteors



▼ The Wardrum is your home away from home throughout much of the game



▼ The Ovans have control over the comet. Kill its engine before it hits your base



▼ You'll have to dock at the end of most missions, which takes some practice. Just go slow

Darklight Conflict is one of those games that could have been a truly great gaming experience, but somewhere along the way to its release was botched. It's a graphically stunning space combat game with more eye candy than substance, a difficulty level to challenge most any space war veteran and decidedly arcade-style gameplay. Like *Privateer 2: The Darkening*, *Darklight Conflict* is an import from Europe, where they apparently don't believe in more than two buttons on a joystick, among other odd oversights.

You play "the Human," a Navy pilot abducted by the Repton aliens right from your Tomcat to fight in their war against the foul Ovan race. As it turns out, both races are, in fact, rather foul and distasteful and have been warring for quite some time now. Regrettably for both sides, the aliens are morons when it comes to battle skills, so the Reptons have taken to rounding up help for their fight.

The game contains 50 extremely challenging and fairly varied missions in which you, the Human, must fight off alien craft and gain absolute proof that neither side has a clue about battle tactics or piloting skill. The surrounding plot is actually fascinating, but the game itself does almost nothing with it – mission briefings are text only and there are virtually no cinematic sequences. You follow orders to the letter to survive, have no control over ship or load-out choices and survival is, more often then not, simply a matter of not running into things. The AI is very weak and sometimes laughable (such as the way enemies will almost only shoot you with guns head-on, not from behind), and your wingmen are next to useless, sometimes even getting in the way.

Easily the most impressive and noteworthy aspect of *Darklight Conflict* is the game engine. A fantastic looking, 3D-space field with beautifully rendered ships and obstacles, excellent light sourcing and lens flares, lots and lots of lens flares. And hey, how bad can a game with lots of lens flares be (ignoring flashbacks to *Destruction Derby 2*…)? The game is always letter-boxed, which is presumably to increase the framerate on lower end machines (which is only partially successful since the game played rather sluggishly at times on a P-133), but there should have been a full screen mode for faster systems.

Overall, *Darklight Conflict* works as a mindless blast fest, but it still has plenty of annoying problems. The main caveat with the game is the joystick support – two buttons only. You can't reconfigure the game's control in any meaningful way and are forced to use the keyboard for such essential commands such as acceleration and rolling. The controls are nowhere near as extensive as they should be; there are no manual lock-on options (the computer simply locks-on to the nearest enemy), and there are no missile countermeasures, leaving you to out-maneuver lock-on weapons which wastes valuable energy.

Despite the shallow gameplay, *Darklight Conflict* contains some of the most impressive physics ever seen in a space combat game – explosions and debris, and their inertial effects, actually affect your ship. In this respect, the game is superior to both the *Wing Commander* and *TIE Fighter* games. Too bad it doesn't have the play depth that would have made it a serious contender to its main competition. *Darklight* also fumbles in the multiplay department; while there is a modem patch due, the game comes only with six-player network support. There is no Internet support (and none is planned – it's terribly slow over Kali), and there aren't even any configuration options to choose your ship, load-out or even a battle arena. The game has one deathmatch zone and that's it.

Darklight Conflict is a severely flawed game, but even with all the oversights and just plain blunders, it has an undeniable "just-one-more-mission" quality. The great graphics, extremely challenging missions (complete with ranting frustration at times), simplistic arcade control and superb physics will likely keep players coming back to it. It's fun and worthy of recommendation on the merits it does have, but could have been so much more. *–Jason D'Aprile*

★★★☆☆

Darklight Conflict
Electronic Arts • www.ea.com •
Requirements: DOS, 60MHz Pentium, 16MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 6 players via LAN

Redneck Rampage

You might be a redneck if you find this entertaining...

Redneck Rampage is one of those games intentionally made to try to offend and entertain with over-the-top humor, stereotypes and caricatures of the absurd. And entertain it does, for about the first two and a half levels. This is a one joke game and it's a novelty joke at that. And for most people over the age of about 12, novelty jokes wear thin real fast.

HeALTH
100
AMMO
KeYS
Yer STUFF

See Bubba, then hit Bubba with a crowbar to exit the level

It must be said, however, that this is probably the best the *Duke Nukem 3D* Build engine has ever looked. The characters (all eight of them, give or take) are 3D rendered and look great. The fourteen single player levels are large and challenging (though sometimes annoyingly maze-like) with a commendable mix of indoor and outdoor settings. The backdrops are made to mimic real-life redneck locales, including such popular spots as the bowling alley, bar and grill, drive-in theater, junkyard, sewage treatment plant, downtown Hickston, and the insane asylum. Power-ups are things like hard liquor and moon-pies, and the weapons are rather mundane (pistol, shotgun, dynamite crossbow, plus some gimmicky things like a saw-blade thrower). The sound effects are excellent, however, though the music (a collection of country rock and roller songs), much like the game, is initially very entertaining but soon becomes tiresome.

Redneck Rampage is a DOS-only game and still uses the same archaic *Duke* setup program to configure it. Other negatives include a 150 megabyte install, no discernible plot during the game, and unlike *Duke*, virtually no interaction with your environment and scenery (you can't even blow up the toilets and lights). Another annoying aspect of the game is the redundancy of enemies; you end up killing the same two rednecks about a thousand times before the game is through.

HeALTH
100
AMMO
49
KeYS
Yer STUFF

"Those aliens are gonna pay for messing up mah pig..."

Redneck Rampage will provide some very challenging first person action in some interesting backdrops, but it utterly lacks any lasting qualities. Like most redneck jokes, this one get real old, real fast. *–Jason D'Aprile*

★★⯨☆☆

Redneck Rampage

Interplay • www.interplay.com • Requirements: DOS, 90MHz Pentium, 16MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-8 players, Internet (through the Engage Games network), LAN, modem

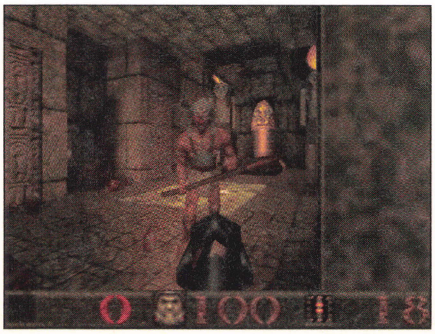
Dissolution of Eternity

First-person shooting at its finest

COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS STAMP OF APPROVAL

The *Quake* engine keeps getting better and no where is this more apparent than in the id-sanctioned *Quake Mission Packs*. While Hipnotic's *Scourge of Armagon* improved the architecture by adding goodies like exploding walls, earthquakes, rolling boulders and, as previously mentioned, an astonishingly vast array of doors, Rogue Entertainment took the other end of the *Quake* evolution spectrum. The two new episodes in the *Dissolution of Eternity* offer up level design and structures that are virtually equal in quality to the Hipnotic Pack, but throw in a larger number of new monsters, weapons and devious new traps.

Quake's high Priests are tough and multiply like mad



The story picks up right after returning home from the first mission pack. Never a dull moment in our nameless marine's life, he finds that the evil and elusive Quake has been up to no good again (Let's all hope that *Quake 2* will actually let gamers kill the bugger). So, back through the slipgate, and into the fray once more to kill Quake's high priests and his Dragon Overlord.

The levels in this game have a very medieval look and feel to them, almost like *Hexen*, with others resembling those found in *Tomb Raider* as well. This episode is extremely entertaining and challenging.

Some of the new additions include the killer lava nails, a nasty floating specter, disembodied swords, a magical shield and not one, but three new bosses including the legendary Dragon. The only problem (and it was a problem with the first pack) is that you'll need some real muscle to play these levels without a cut on the frame rate, as the design is complex and even beautiful throughout the fifteen (plus) levels. That aside, even if you didn't think much of the initial *Quake* levels, the fact remains that this is some of the finest first person shooting action you can get. *–Jason D'Aprile*

There are some cool sights to see in the latest Quake adventure

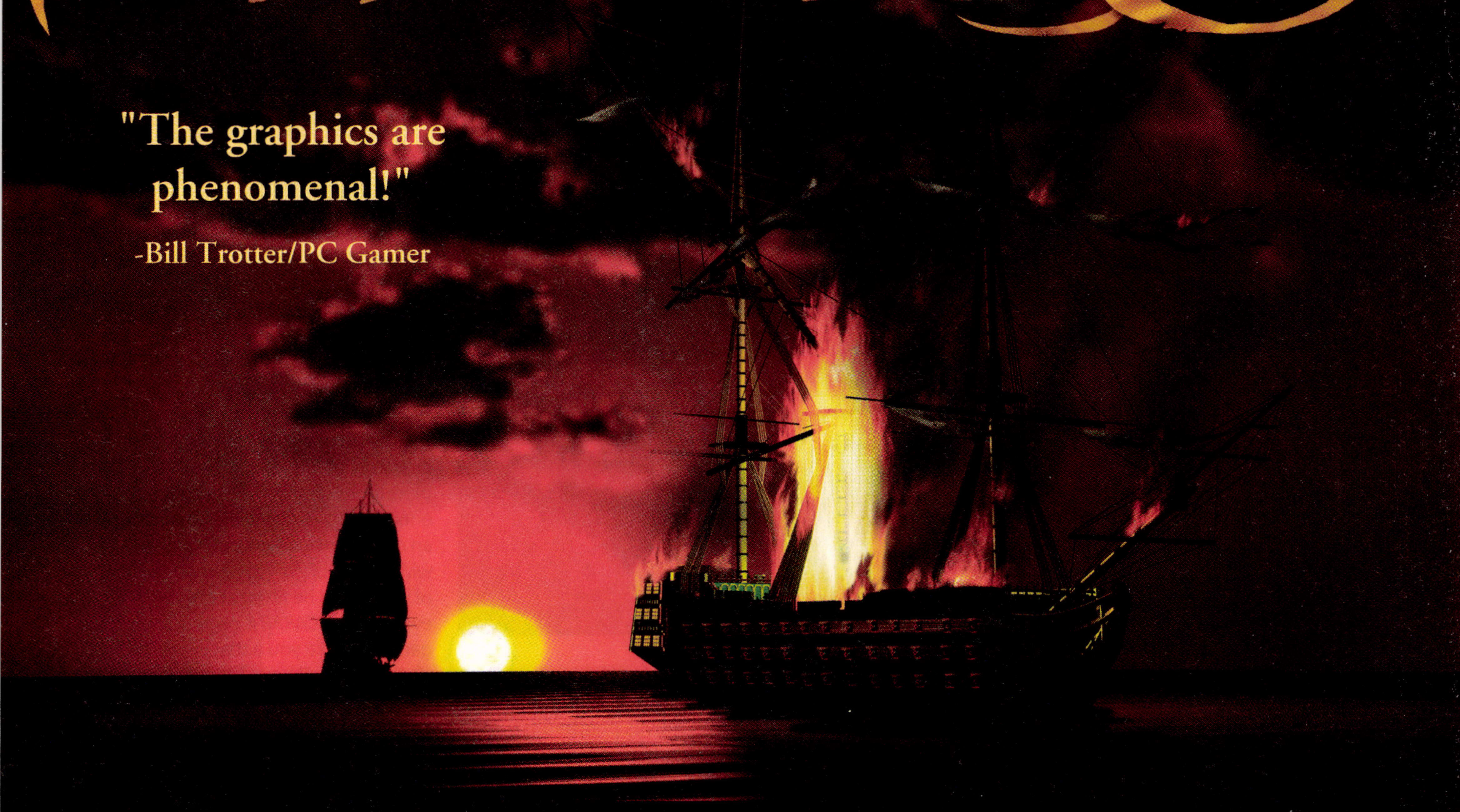
★★★⯨☆

Quake Mission Pack No. 2: Dissolution of Eternity

Activision • www.activision.com • Requirements: Quake • Multiplayer: 2-16 players, Internet, LAN, modem

MAN OF WAR

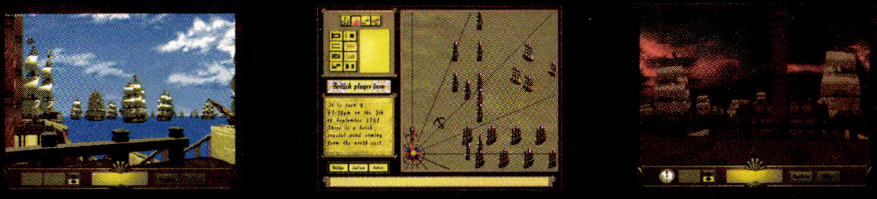
> "The graphics are phenomenal!"
>
> -Bill Trotter/PC Gamer



Return to a time when land was won at sea...

Set during the age of fighting sail, when the oceans rang with cannon shot and splintering timber, MAN OF WAR's 3D first-person perspective lets you experience first hand the saga of an Admiral's life at sea. With a fleet of ships in your charge and a nation's fate in the balance, bear witness to the consequence of your command and change the course of history.

. 3D Rendered Graphics . Large Scale Fleet Actions . First-Person Perspective

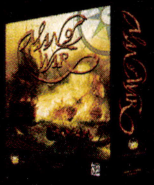


(Actual in-game graphics)

STRATEGY FIRST INC.

SIMULATIONS
CANADA

RATING PENDING
RP
ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD



PC-CD ROM

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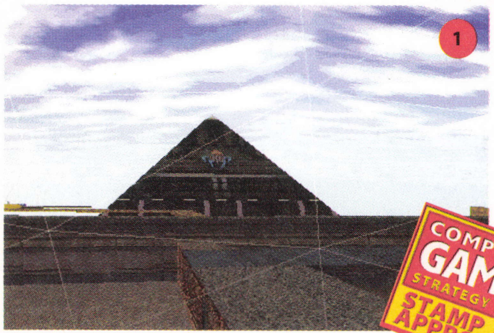
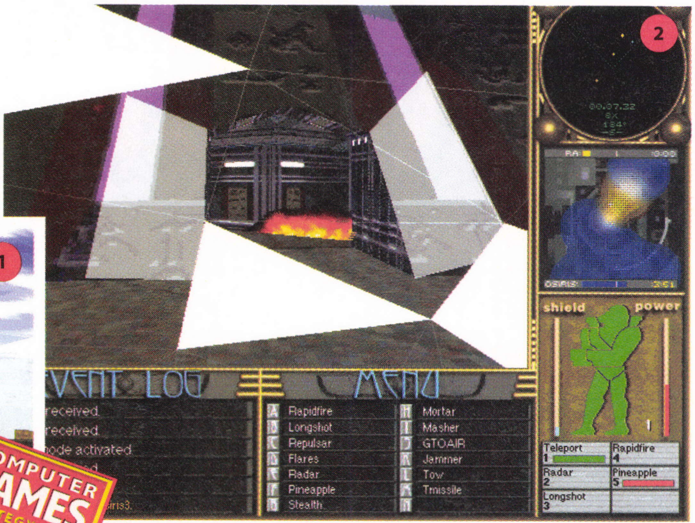
SCARAB

An Egyptian treasure worth searching for





[1] **A glorious day for battle!**

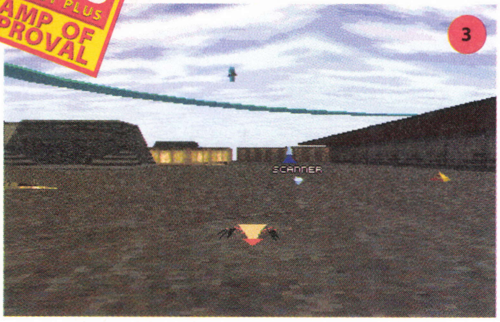
[2] **Shields almost gone, and a Wall of Fire to cross. Bummer**

[3] **This little scorpion can cause a lot of trouble**

[4] **This guy's about ready to join the pharaohs**

[5] **Night missions require their own tactics**

COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS STAMP OF APPROVAL



SCARAB is one of EA's lost children; a spiritual descendant of Simutronic's much lauded *CyberStrike*, EA has chosen to all but forgo marketing this gem. Why this is so remains a mystery, but it is well worth searching the bottom racks of your software store for a copy.

SCARAB is equal parts action and strategy, with a richness rarely found in the action genre. The game plays against a backdrop of pseudo-Egyptian mythology, where gods war by way of giant robots. But if you're thinking *MechWarrior II*, forget it. These 'bots may just as well be men in armored suits, save for the fact that a limb can be destroyed without harm to the rest of the creature.

The name of the game is power. A team wins by covering over half the map with it's own energy field, then maintaining that majority for five minutes. A game can also be won by destroying all the enemies thrice. Power radiates from towers, which in turn are dropped by a hovering (what else) dropship. This same dropship also provides players with a range of power-up modules used to customize a 'bot in mid-game. A player has only to hit a key, and his team's ship will fly over and the desired modules or towers will soon be raining down (always a dead giveaway as to one's whereabouts).

A geodesic shield protects each 'bot, and this shield in turn is augmented by the surrounding energy field (starting to see the interrelationships yet)? As a segment of the shield takes hits, it grows opaque, and finally fails. The player can spin the shield to keep a fresh face towards potential enemies. After a hard-won battle it can become almost impossible to find a clear bit of shield to see through. Stumble around blindly, or drop your shields? The choice is yours.

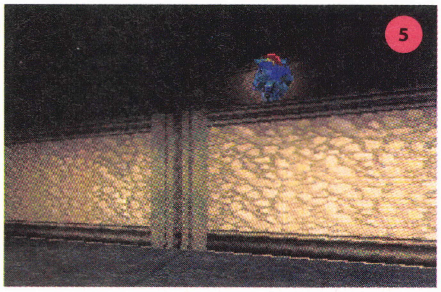
Offensively, each of the three different 'bot designs has its own selection of specialty weapons. One (Anubis) is designed for conventional ground battle while another (Horus) is designed for speed. It can fly with the assistance of rocket fuel modules, and can carry a variety of mines. The last bot is the Sekhmet. This behemoth moves ponderously, it's footfalls booming across the landscape. But it can carry mortars, TOW missiles, and other weapons that can reach out over long distances to slag an unsuspecting enemy.

Controls are for the most part straightforward. Run, turn, jump, look around (via hat-switch) and precise aiming. This last is accomplished by holding down a joystick button, after which the stick moves your targeting reticule rather than the 'bot. This can be used for clearing away mines, or concentrating fire on a specific enemy appendage.

The fairly simple controls work exceptionally well within the landscapes: polygonal playgrounds full of platforms, tunnels, dead ends and moving skyways. Taking too much fire? Turn and run, leap that wall and hit the stealth module (which removes you from radar). Turn left, through the tunnel and across the open space, then duck into that pyramid. Lost him! Now call the dropship and have it drop a sarcophagus (which is a device for repairing damage). The sense of being there is intense.

As for strategy, the team aspects and the choice of winning via energy or kills creates a lot of possibilities. Intelligent placement of towers to produce optimum energy, plus knowing when *not* to destroy an opponent's tower, adds more. And the wide range of power-up modules (only six of which can be fitted at one time) adds even more. *SCARAB* is more a sport than a game. It'll take you a day or two to "get it" but after that, you'll be refining tactics for a long time to come.

The only flaw, if one can call it that, is finding good human opponents. During the review period, most gamers on Mplayer treated *SCARAB* like a *Doom* clone, playing deathmatch only (which strips most of the strategy from the game). As a straight-action first-person shooter, *SCARAB* is mediocre at best. But played the way the designer intended, as two teams (up to three 'bots per side) struggling for control of a cityscape, *SCARAB* excels, and is one of the better games to show up thus far this year. Highly recommended, and please, learn the rules and play the full game. You won't be disappointed. *–Peter Smith*



★★★★½

SCARAB

Electronic Arts • www.ea.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 90MHz Pentium, 16 MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-6 players, Internet, LAN or modem

Test Drive: Off-Road

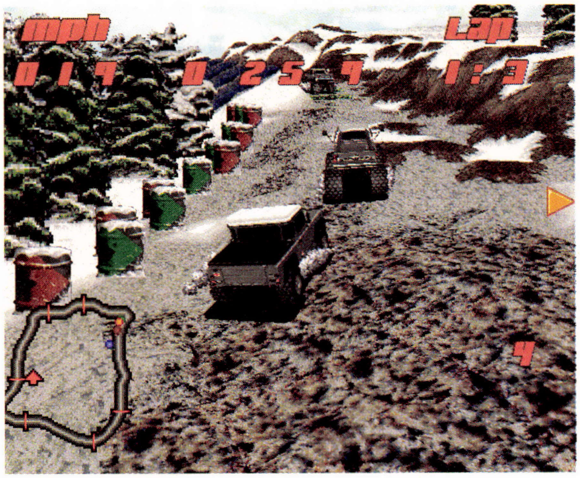
A down and dirty disappointment

The allure of piloting some of the world's most exotic cars has always been the main draw of the *Test Drive* series. Now that the series has moved from the highway to the byways, it's clear that driving a Chevy Z-71 Pickup, Land Rover Defender, Jeep Wrangler or Hummer just isn't as sexy.

Ultimately, the lack of high-performance machinery is only one of many things that cause *Test Drive: Off-Road* to be such a disappointment. In addition, you'll find a bad car model, bizarre physics, an announcer who apparently knows three exclamations, monotonous sound effects, poor frame rates and questionable design decisions (who thought it was a good idea to switch the driver into reverse if they come to a complete stop and continue to hold the brake?).

You can start with the most important component of a racing game: the handling. It's nearly impossible to drive any of the four default vehicles on anything but the easiest skill level. Stock 4x4's like the Jeep Wrangler, with their limited horsepower, do not easily oversteer when accelerating – rally cars do, but they have over 400 horsepower. There's also the issue of the gameworld physics, or more specifically the overabundance of gravity, which turns every potential jump into a non-event. What's an off-road racing game without the threat, and entertainment value, of getting airborne?

Then there are the tracks themselves. While not being particularly memorable, they have serious problems when you go off of the track. Unlike *Monster Truck Madness*, all roadside objects are immovable, which can make it nearly impossible for you to get back on the track. The 3D engine also renders distant objects too late, meaning they're in your face by the time you see them. This, combined with lap time and MPH indicators that appear on the horizon line with the default camera position, make it tough to figure out where the hell you're going.



Racing in the snow. The graphics look OK, but require a serious PC

Overall, off-road racing is an inherently entertaining subject for a game, so *Test Drive: Off-Road* has that going for it. Beyond that, it's incredibly flawed. *–Steve Bauman*

★★☆☆☆

Test Drive: Off-Road

Accolade • www.accolade.com • Requirements: DOS, 90MHz Pentium, 16MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM, Multiplayer 2-4 players, LAN, modem, null-modem, split-screen

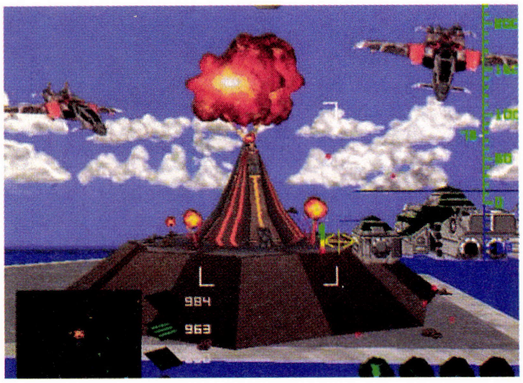
HeliCOPS

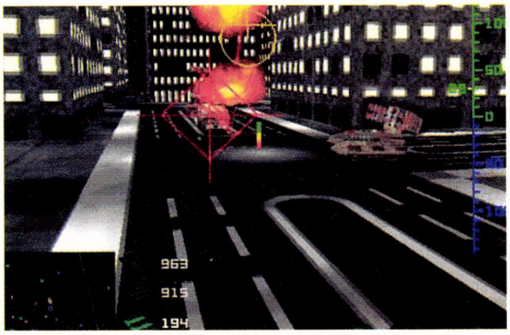
The sweet aftertaste of pure adrenaline

It's 1998, and NeoTokyo is writhing under the iron fist of a powerful nemesis. Teetering on the brink of ruination, its citizens cry out for redemption. Enter the HeliCOPS, a new breed of warriors who don't care about whiny citizens, or a senseless plot; they just wanna shoot stuff.

Silently slipping onto store shelves, *HeliCOPS* ranks as the purest form of adrenal caressing this side of the new year. Forget realism or the rich aromatic flavor of purpose. It's not deep, but with twenty missions, five helicopters, five animé style pilots, and five vastly different arenas to fly in, *HeliCOPS* strips away everything but combat and unadulterated fun.

The distinct solidity to the game world (complimented by towering skyscrapers, treacherous gullies, and freeway overpasses you can fly over or under) far exceeds other games of this style. The refreshing variety of terrain and perpetual onslaught of terrestrials leaves very little room to pause. In most missions, you'll be furiously pounded non-stop from beginning to end.





[top to bottom]
Careening through the city streets without fear; De HeliCOPS ain't afraid of no giant nasal spray

Unless you failed a night class on "Beginning Clapper Techniques," flying your chopper's a no-brainer. Just pretend you're flying a bumper car copiloted by a mutant Weeble (he wobbles, but he won't fall down). Though unrealistic, this simplicity leaves you with plenty of incentive to careen through obstacles at breakneck speed with no fear for your life. In addition to the solo missions, players can battle across any of the landscapes against foes, friends, or foes you *think* are friends. Unbeatable stability and little or no lag make this a premiere game for Internet play.

Simply put, playing *HeliCOPS* equates to chomping down on a chocolate covered cockroach. Sure, the texture's a little strange, but for any action fanatic the sweet aftertaste will linger for months on end. *–Tim Royal*

★★★⯪☆

HeliCOPS

7th Level • www.7thlevel.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 100MHz Pentium, 8MB of RAM, 4X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-4 players, Internet, LAN, modem

Road to Nowhere

GURPS
GENERIC UNIVERSAL ROLEPLAYING SYSTEM

The GURPS dilemma: Equal time for Steve Jackson Games

Last month, I devoted this space to a discussion of Interplay's role in the divorce of its *Fallout* from Steve Jackson's GURPS. Actually, it was more of an annulment. Some might say that consummation had occurred, but the Pope granted an annulment anyway…it's cleaner that way. Steve Jackson had plenty of input on the subject and was kind enough to share it with us:

Steve Jackson…

G U R P S
MECHA
STEVE JACKSON GAMES
G U R P S
ROBOTS
STEVE JACKSON GAMES
G U R P S
ILLUMINATI
STEVE JACKSON GAMES
G U R P S
REIGN OF STEEL
STEVE JACKSON GAMES

…and his games

Post nuclear and post GURPS

There seemed to be a misunderstanding about creative control at the bottom of this issue – whether you had blanket approval of all game elements, or whether it would be over GURPS elements only.
The Interplay boy that I talked to about that admitted that the contract said just exactly what *I* had said and that *that* was what had been agreed upon in the beginning, but apparently some people there were allowed to go for a long time with the idea that they had freedom to do whatever they wanted…It was not a problem between Interplay and SJG, but a problem with people there reading and not understanding the contract and not communicating enough amongst themselves. At least that's what they admitted to me.

So you went to Interplay last February to try and work this out. What happened?
I had been told before I went that Brian Fargo wanted to talk to me and then when I got there, he wouldn't take my calls.

Did this came as a shock to you?
There was fairly regular communication going back and forth and things were going pretty well until they sent me this alpha and I said, "Hey, wait a minute…" and then things went downhill from there. There were several things there that I had problems with; one thing for instance that was completely unacceptable was an opening gunshot in the head. They could have made this acceptable by taking a second of footage out of the opening movie. At one point they agreed to *do* that… then that agreement went away.

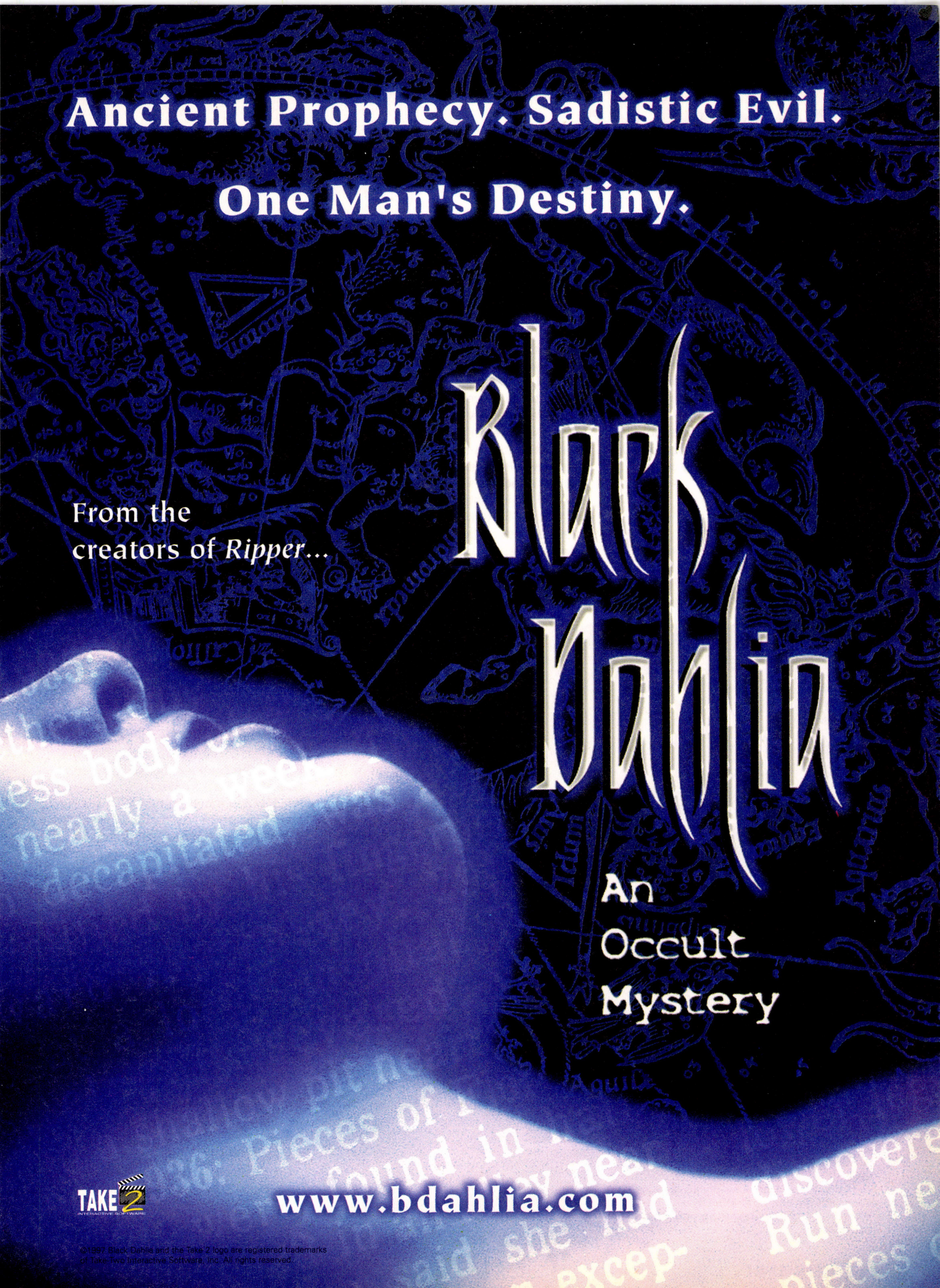
So are you going to try to give another company a shot at the license, or perhaps try to work with Interplay again?
Interplay keeps floating the suggestion at me via news reporters, and one man once came out and said that they'd like to do another GURPS game and not to break the contract. [Interplay employees] have said on their web sites more than one thing about this issue that just isn't true. There were online posts that Steve Jackson was a full participant in the discussion of all of this….Oh, yeah, right, that's like saying Abraham Lincoln was a full participant in his assassination. I guess I'm just thinking about people getting shot in the head now. [*Note: Steve Jackson was not happy that this analogy slipped out, but it did. He offered to provide a gentler analogy, but why fight the natural emotion?*] There are so many ways that you can do an opening movie that I fail to see why they would throw the entire deal away and go through all the trouble of starting all over again over one second of footage. Can that really be the priority?

Was that the only creative difference?
There were other creative differences, but when meeting with Tim [Cain, producer & lead programmer of *Fallout*] I compromised away every other creative difference in order to try and save the game. And he told me that they could black that thing [the gunshot] out, but then that part of the agreement went away, and I started getting other calls from people in the organization talking about other things…

So you were never notified that the contract was terminated by them?
No. I've not been notified by them in any formal way that they are not using GURPS in that game. The first I heard about it was from a journalist who had called and asked me about it.

Perhaps they are trying to protect themselves from damage at this late a date in the cycle. Isn't it true that after a period of 18 months from the original signing of the contract three years ago, a period well gone at this point, that you, yourself could withdraw from the contract at any time?
No. It wasn't 18 months. It was considerably longer than that, I don't remember the exact period, but at any rate, it's over now, but as I told them repeatedly, I'm not about to pull the plug on a successful game that's going forward. And I told them that if we got these other issues compromised that *of course* I'd sign off on an extension. I *wanted* it to come out.

And so did we, Steve. We look forward to seeing GURPS *somewhere down the line – marriage counselor in tow. –Cindy Yans*



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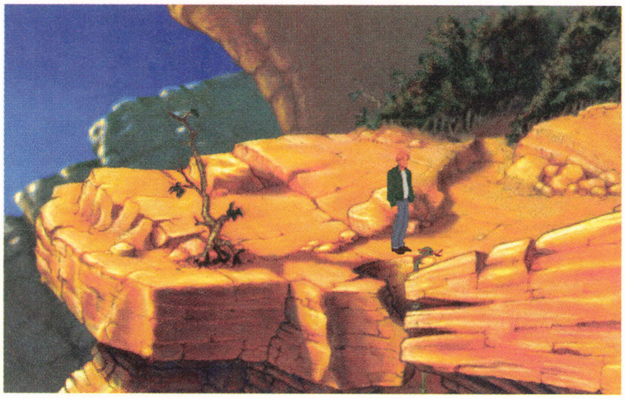
Boots of Re

Unca squares the Circle (of Blood)



Combine the towel with a stick and use it on the cliff to climb down

Treasure of Dragon Madre (a dragon's tale)

During these months I've been mourning Slim, I flew to Mexico. There I teamed up with a pal and an old prospector to mine gold in Dragon Madre. We struck it rich! But, it's a shame what prospecting does to a dragon in mourning. At least it's a shame what happened to me. You think I got greedy and killed my partners for their share of the gold? Nah. I just got hungry and ate them.

Hot & not

Diablo was again the month's most popular role-playing game. *Shivers II: Harvest of Souls* is enjoying enormous popularity in the genre of adventure games.

Circle of Blood: Acts Six through Eleven

In Act Six show the carpet salesman the matchbook. In Club Alamut talk to Ultar about the restroom sign and show him all your items. Examine Arto and his kebab stand to see him using the toilet brush. Nejo will accept the red ball in exchange for an Arabic phrase to use on Arto. Get the brush from Nejo and give it to the manager of the Alamut to get a roller towel in the restroom. Stroke the cat, ring the desk bell, use the tissue on the broken statuette and sell it to the tourist. Pay Ultar fifty bucks then give him the roller towel to repair the truck. Combine the towel with a stick and use it on the cliff to climb down. Pull the ring in the niche. Search Klausner's body for a lens. Look at Baphomet and read the inscription. Tell Khan the truth and that you'll die like a man. Use the buzzer to shake hands and jump off the cliff.

In Act Seven go to Montfaucon in Paris and enter the church. Give the chalice to the priest and put the lens in the statue's scroll. After you see the burning man, recover the chalice and examine the tomb in the corner. Go to the museum and ask about Baphomet.

In Act Eight go to the Institut Nerval in Paris and enter the lobby. Examine both doors. Ask the guard for the keys to the restroom and enter it. Use the soap with the keys, then with the plaster and finally with the water tap. Give the keys back to guard and try to dip the plaster key in the paint outside. Phone Nico from the lobby to have her call the painter to the phone. Dip the key in the paint and then ask the guard for the keys again. Exchange keys in the restroom and talk to the guard about the thermostat. Turn off the thermostat and give the fake key to the guard when he puts on his gloves. Call Nicole and wait. The guard will end up arguing with the painter. Enter the Excavation room and use the chalice on the colored patch of tile.

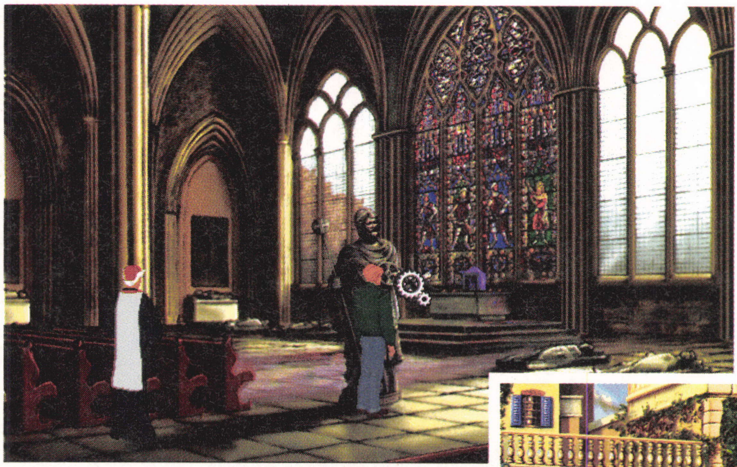
In Act Nine take the mirror from the utility room, then talk to the Countess. Go to the mausoleum and close the window. Put the tissue on the pole and light it by clicking on the bottom of the left candle, then light the big candle to get the stone key. Take the Bible to the Countess. Talk to Lopez and take a Hazel stick from the tree by the utility window and show it to him. Examine the lion's head in the well chamber and pull its tooth (move left immediately). Use the mirror on the shaft of sunlight to see the keyhole, then touch it and insert the stone key.

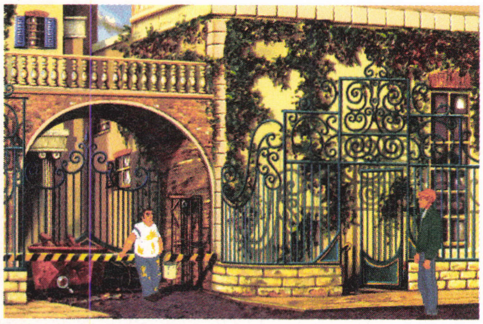
In Act Ten try to exit once to bring in the conductor, then exit again and go screen left to meet Guido. Go back to check on Nicole. Enter the next compartment and talk to the drunken Scotsman. Climb out his window and climb into the baggage car screen right. After Guido is thrown off the train, pull the brake on the left wall. Try to exit screen left twice.

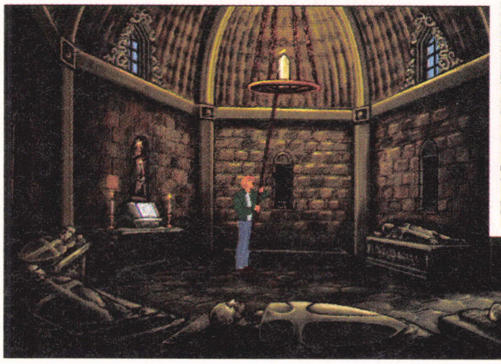
In Act Eleven, turn the handle on the wheel to break it off and get the cog and spindle. Examine the rubble three times to get another cog. Use the cogs and handle on the demon's face to enter the crypt. Exit screen right, and when it's time to escape, grab the nearest torch and throw it on the gunpowder.

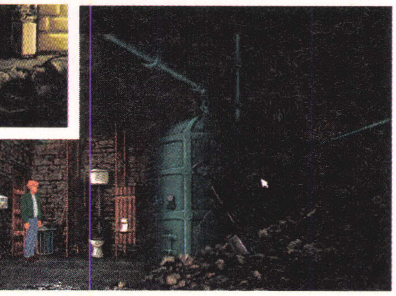
Selemat tinggal (goodbye in Indonesian).

–Andy Backer









[clockwise from top left] Put the lens in the statue's scroll; In Act Eight go to the Institut Nerval in Paris; Use the soap with the keys, then with the plaster and finally with the water tap; Light the big candle to get the stone key

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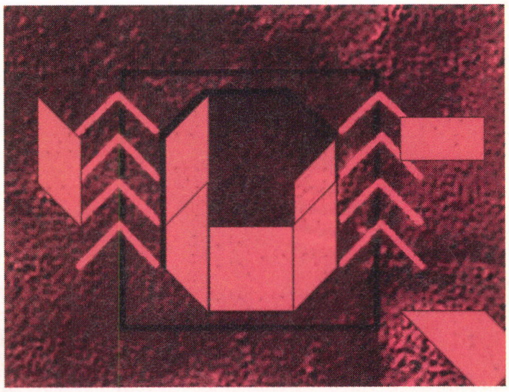
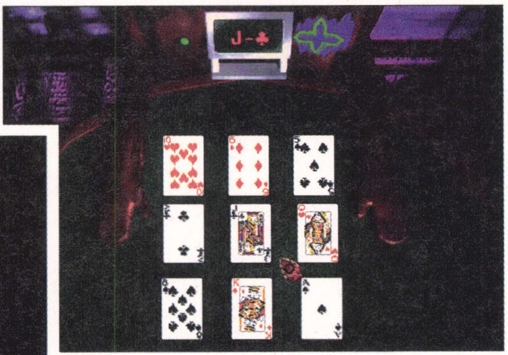
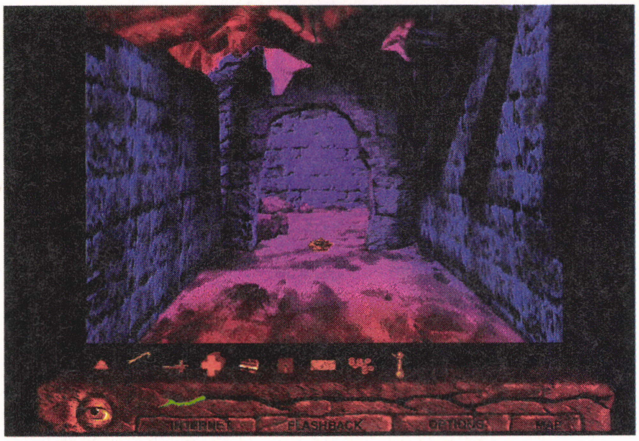
Shivers II: Harvest of Souls

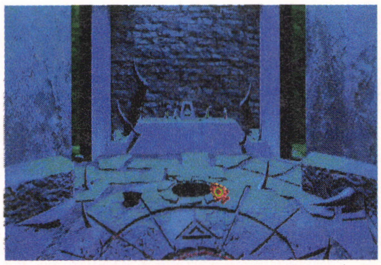
Not exactly spine tingling

[clockwise from top] Hope you like jigsaw puzzles, because Shivers 2 has a cavern full of them; Memory still work? This little card game will put it to the test; Explore the ruins of an ancient Indian burial cavern in your quest to free your; The altar room where everything, eventually, leads too. Carefully place the prayer sticks in their proper slots









The genre generally known as the graphic puzzle adventure sure seems due for a major shake-up anytime now. It's always been one of those love-it or hate-it styles of gaming, but hasn't really changed all that much in its basic structure since *Myst*. The graphics for all these sorts of games are still gorgeous, the surroundings inevitably strange and almost utterly lifeless and the "adventure" part of the game always takes a back seat to the puzzles. Advances, it seems, are consigned strictly to making the graphic engine behave more like actual movement instead of simple screen updates. So, Sierra's latest addition to this well-worn style of play, *Shivers II*, comes to us with some modicum of hope that it might offer something that breaks any of these molds. Unfortunately, it doesn't.

Not a direct sequel to the original *Shivers*, but instead a completely unrelated tale of supposed horror and suspense, *Shivers II* takes place in the recently and conveniently abandoned mining town of Cyclone. You arrive several weeks after your musically inclined, pop hopeful friends (whose band is named Trip Cyclone) and find that something is awry in this paranoid little town – like the fact that everyone is gone and that they all seemed to have used the same surprisingly tacky decorator (decor ranges from Indian style artistry to African and Oriental but all end up looking like cheesy Art-deco). The storyline itself is actually interesting, however. You have been dubbed "the warrior" by a mysterious figure named Darkcloud who has apparently not just kidnapped and trapped your friends but the whole town within ritualistic Indian cave markings called petroglyphs. Almost the whole game revolves around searching the various buildings for twelve Indian prayer sticks called bahos that must be placed on an altar before they suck your life force away. The addition of a lifebar would seem to add an unusual twist but it seldom becomes an issue during play after the first or second stick is found.

Another interesting aspect to the game is the fact that many occurrences are dependent upon discovering clues from various sources, which brings up another caveat. *Shivers II* requires you to sit through all of Trip Cyclone's short music videos in order to complete several of the puzzles, which is a questionable design move at best – especially considering that most of the videos and musical numbers are quite bad. As in most games of this type, everything revolves around and, in the end, takes a noticeable back seat to the puzzles. For this game, the puzzles provide its major strength and appeal. There are some very clever puzzles to be found here, though many are fairly basic and some types are used repeatedly (how many odd-shaped jigsaw puzzles can you tolerate in one game?). A number are quite difficult and, when combined with the numerous item hunts, give the game a very decent longevity (some of the necessary items are hidden in very obscure ways).

Shivers II uses a 360-degree rotational control scheme that works very well and even allows up/down viewing, and screen updates when moving to a new location are quite fast. The game is also commendably tweakable when it comes to matching it to your system's performance. Other excellent features include a town map for easy navigation, a flashback menu to re-view valuable clues and an instant solve option for those puzzles that utterly stump you (though it costs points to use). The atmospheric location-based music includes some excellent tracks as well, and the game's use of the telephone was an interestingly creative aspect. It also contains a nice Internet-based chat feature that connects you to a special room for the game and will even let you chat and play. There are also some puzzles you can customize and send to other players.

Much as it tries, *Shivers II* just doesn't convey any sort of real atmosphere and has virtually no suspense whatsoever in the execution of its plot (with the possible exception of the rather annoying end sequence). It's regrettable that Sierra didn't try to add anything new to the game to make it rise above the heads of its competitors. The high difficulty level of much of the game will surely make it worthwhile for hard-core fans of puzzle games, but definitely not those looking for true adventure; and when based strictly on its brain-teasing merit, the game *is* recommendable, as it will definitely prove to be a challenge to complete. *–Jason D'Aprile*

★★★☆☆

Shivers II: Harvest of Souls

Sierra • www.sierra.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 486 DX2/66 or higher, 12MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: Built-in chat for up to six players

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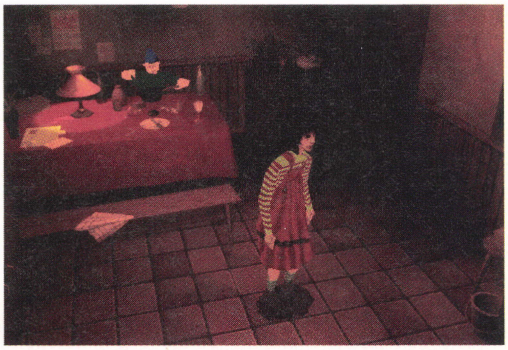
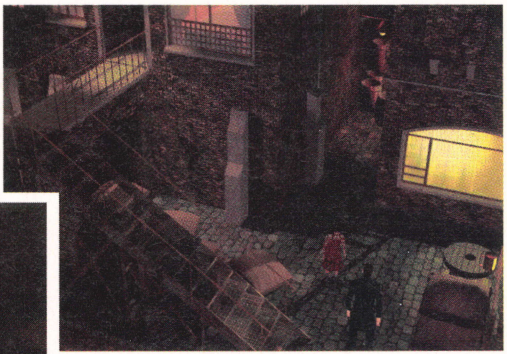
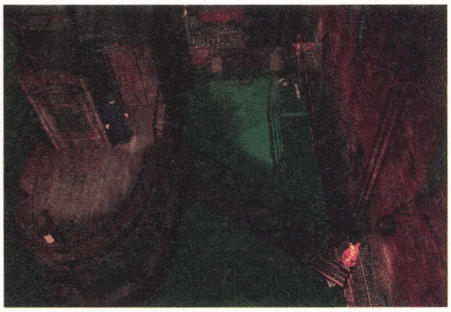
The City of Lost Children

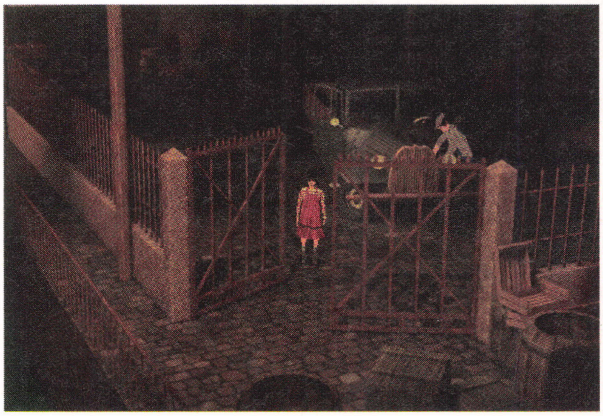
An experiment gone terribly wrong

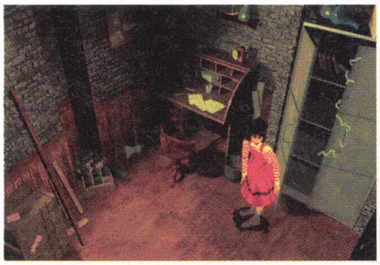
[clockwise from top] **Boule has a magic potion that you'll need, but he won't give it to you for free; You must outsmart this Cyclops to get to the loanshark's house. Cyclops hate loud noises; Distracting this stodgy night watchman is a necessity to completing Miette's first heist; A misplaced tool by the truck will help Miette get the bell to rid her path of the Cyclops; Nothing like a little breaking and entering when you're twelve years old**











Psygnosis' latest adventure, *The City of Lost Children*, is in some ways similar to what could be their masterpiece of the year, *Ecstatica 2*, with its beautiful prerendered scenery and wonderfully animated 3D characters. Unfortunately, the similarities end there. The game is based upon the beautiful, surreal French film of the same name about a young street girl named Miette and a strongman known only as One who is searching for his kidnapped brother. Behind the disappearance is a bizarre genetic construct named Krank, who cannot dream so instead kidnaps children to try to steal theirs. The film is a wonderfully strange and stylish visual treat with odd characters, gritty and dark urban settings and a plot, cinematography design and directorial sense that made it something of a cross between *Twelve Monkeys*, *Strange Days* and the Brothers Grimm.

Suffice it to say, the movie itself is highly recommended and had any of the designers of the game bothered to study the film, they would have seen hours upon hours of situations and puzzles that would have made this a wonderful jump from the cinema to the PC screen. Instead, they've ended up maligning and botching the transition at almost every level. *The City of Lost Children* is a great looking game to be sure, but the scenery is virtually lifeless making it more like *Myst* than a 3D, character-based adventure. Even the various denizens of this alter-Paris whom you'll meet throughout the scenes are merely facets of some slightly larger puzzle that inevitably must be solved by finding item A and using it on object B. Lights flicker on and off in windows, but everything seems static and dead, and lifeless is not a term one would use to describe the film.

Usable items are generally so ridiculously placed that you have to traverse every inch of the various scenes to find them, and many of the puzzles are remarkably obscure and even frustrating because they require agonizingly painstaking character control. The game is played entirely with the keyboard and controls are unintuitive (there are three action keys even though one would have been sufficient given the simplistic nature of the gameplay). Also, the game imposes a limited number of save slots, which is pointless for a PC title. And when all is said and done, the game is absurdly short (maybe two or so hours worth of playtime once you know the solutions). More outrageously, the game doesn't even embrace the whole storyline. Actual gameplay stops when you find the means to get to the oil rig where the children are kept; then a non-interactive cinematic sequence showing Miette rescuing the children takes over and the credits roll. It's as if the designers got sick of working on the game and decided to call it quits before they had an actual finished product.

The animation and voice acting of the main character, Miette, is excellent, though many of the other characters make you wish they had used the original French voices instead. Another odd choice is that the game only allows you to be Miette, instead of switching control between One and the girl. Indeed, One plays a very minor role in the game (you see him in three of the cinematic scenes, but only once during the actual game). Had the puzzles been more intelligent and the game better designed, *City* might have been able to attract the elusive gaming girl market based on the strength of the main character.

It looks good and does have some excellent Jazz music, but *the City of Lost Children* is in the end, much like Krank, an experiment gone terribly wrong. At the core, it's nothing more than a mediocre, poorly designed and executed adventure game that, given its haunting and powerful roots, should have been a wonderfully clever and innovative title. For those who thought highly of the film, it's more than just mediocre, it's a travesty that utterly butchers the plot, style and substance of a truly creative, bizarre and enjoyable viewing experience. *–Jason D'Aprile*

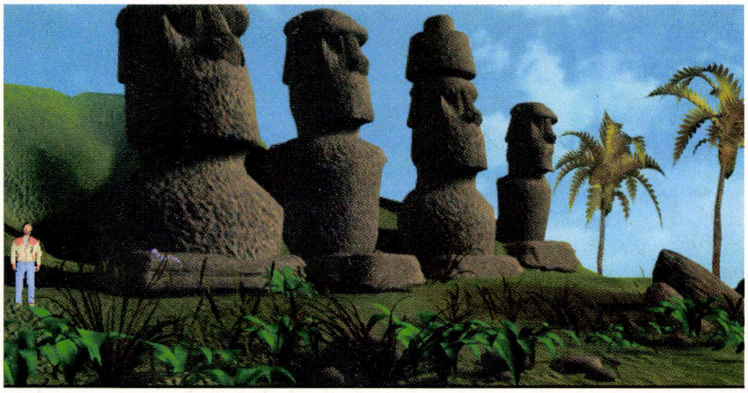
★☆☆☆☆

The City of Lost Children

Psygnosis • www.psygnosis.com • Requirements: DOS, 486 DX4/100 or higher, 8MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: None

Ark of Time

From Stonehedge to Atlantis ...again

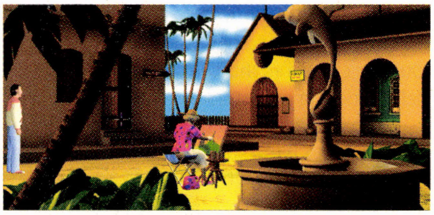


There's much to like about Koei's graphic adventure *Ark of Time*, including its high-res, animated 3D graphics; scavenger hunt type puzzles, hours of digital speech and its game length.

The hero is a young American reporter (the player's alter ego) who writes for a paper in England. His editor sends him to several different locations in England, Central America and Africa as well as to various islands in the Pacific to find a well known professor presumed lost while searching for legendary Atlantis. In *Chariot of the Gods* fashion the story ties together and explains what the standing rocks are for at Stonehenge and why there are stone heads on Easter Island. The story is wrapped in snappy dialogue which is for the most part humorous. There are also some very touching moments.

The problem is that the game is not always high quality. It is very uneven. Some of it is brilliant, but some of it is mediocre. The story is at its best when it tells the tale of alien scientists from underwater Atlantis who become gods. It is at its silliest when it introduces a cliché human villain complete with his cliché henchman. Although the graphics are generally exquisite, the claymation that animates the characters often makes them look awkward and unbelievable (the lack of lip-synching is especially disconcerting). The full motion video scenes do not blend into the game and interrupt the flow by taking too long to load. Some screens are so dark it's nearly impossible to find puzzle solving objects; and finally, along with leaving some stilted dialogue, sloppy proof-readers left misspellings ("sweat" is misspelled "sweet"). Still, the good outweighs the bad, and although *Ark of Time* is uneven it's still much better than average. –*Andy Backer*

[top to bottom] The reporter goes to Easter Island in pursuit of clues; The high-res graphics are exquisite



★★★☆☆

Ark of Time

Koei Corporation • www.koeigames.com • Requirements: DOS, 486 DX2/66, 8MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: None

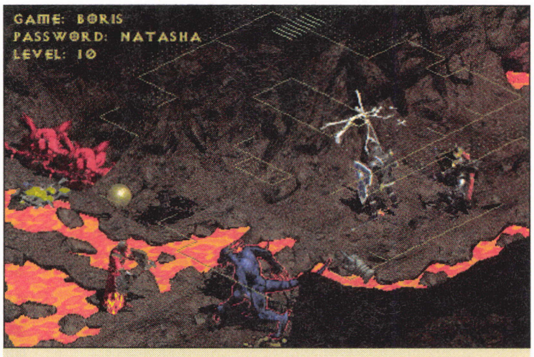
ARE STRATEGY GAMES TOO

CIVILIZED?

Diablo

Part III: A melange of last-minute advice, as told by two who've been there

We're here today with Carmina and Gillain, two of the stalwart adventurers who've been fighting the evil that exists beneath the nearly deserted town of Tristram. *CGS+* was fortunate to get an exclusive interview with these celebs of the cellars.


GAME: BORIS
PASSWORD: NATASHA
LEVEL: 10

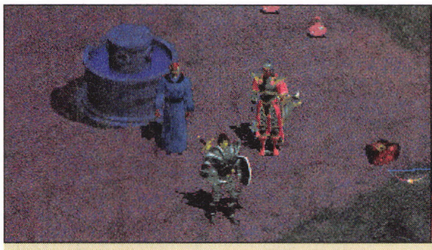
Luckily Relp has a mana shield up, or he woulda bought it right after this shot was taken

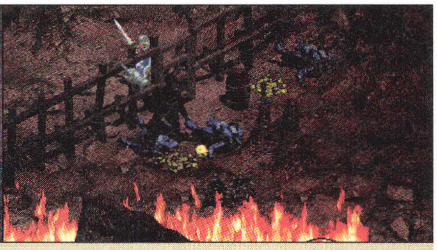
Why not begin by telling us, in your own words, about the difference between the three difficulty levels in the game: normal, nightmare, and hell?

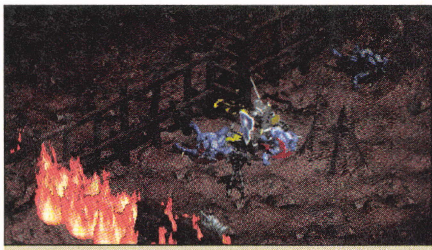
Carmina: Well obviously, Nightmare has tougher creatures than Normal, and in Hell mode the monsters are tougher than in Nightmare. But there are subtler differences as well. Creatures in the harder levels have better resistance to magic, fire and/or lightning.

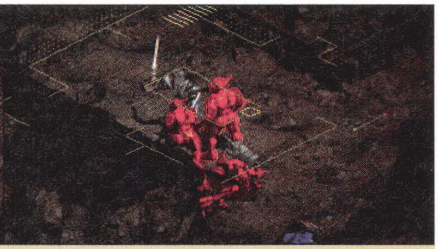
Gillain: Also, in Nightmare and Hell mode, monsters hit a lot faster. It becomes more and more important to have "Fast Recovery" (which helps your recovery from being hit) and "Fastest Hit" (which causes you to literally skip animation frames, and thus hit faster) weapons or items.

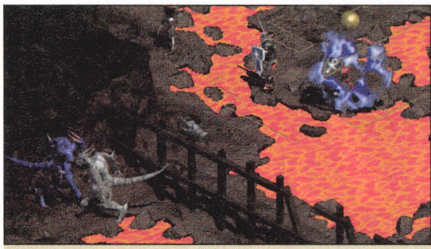
Carmina: Things not only hit faster, they move faster as well. I have difficulty outrunning things when playing a Hell game, and running is often a rogue's best battle strategy.

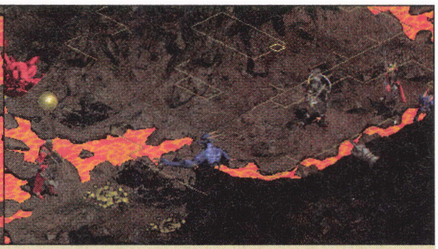

Throw extra gear into a pile near the fountain to act as "community armory"


In the caves, fences slow a beast's progress, letting you get off some offensive spells, such as the flame wave I just cast


Firewall serves as excellent protection. Most things coming at you through it will take at least some damage


While Gillain hacks, Carmina stands off to one side at a 90 degree angle to Gil's facing. This keeps friendly fire incidents to a minimum


Poor placement! Relp has stone-cursed a Storm Rider, but Gillain can't get across the lava at it, and Carmina can't see it


Lava can be a bane or a boon, depending on how you use it. Think of it as a wall that you can shoot through, and work it that way

Let's talk magic – for those in our audience who don't like to get their hands dirty, what are your favorite spells?

Carmina: It's certainly a matter of taste. As a rogue, I can shoot and kill things from far away which minimizes the amount of damage I take in certain situations. But I have limited strength and can't wear enough armor to increase my AC to the level of most warriors. For these reasons, I rely heavily on my Mana Shield spell. This allows me to stand in the middle of a swarm of monsters in close combat and absorb far more damage than I'd otherwise be able to tolerate given my relatively low AC and vitality stats. It's pretty effective.

Some of my other favorite spells are Guardian, Firewall and Stone Curse. Cast a Guardian into an unexplored room, and if there's anything hiding in there, the Guardian will start firing at it. I use this a lot when playing alone as an early warning system to keep the danger of ambush to a minimum. It's also useful during battle against monsters. Firewall protects me and at the same time causes a lot of damage to opponents. Stone Curse is indispensable against fierce single opponents, such as the Butcher or Skeleton King. Others tell me that it's supposed to work against Diablo himself, but mine never has. Perhaps it's still at too low a level.

The Golem spell is quite useful on the easier levels, but I find that at spell level 3 it doesn't create fellows that are effective in the Caves or Hell. And Teleport has been useful to get me out of nasty swarms of monsters when I was surrounded and couldn't run away.

Gillain: I have a mage friend who has a level 10 Golem spell. His golems are *very* tough. He just casts the spell and sits back and lets the exp roll in.

As for *my* favorite spells...well, every fighter should have Heal and Town Portal, of course, plus some sort of area offensive spell. It's the only way to keep up. See, mages and rogues stand back and get hits on many enemies at once. Since the damage you inflict is proportional to the amount of the enemies' experience you acquire, a warrior is at a disadvantage since his milieu is one-on-one combat. The rogues and mages are hitting the same bad guy from afar and getting a portion of *your* exp, plus they're getting the experience from whatever foes die exclusively by *their* hand. I struggled to keep up in levels with Carmina until I started throwing Flames Waves and Chain Lightnings around. Now I can keep pace with the best of them!

Carmina: Oh, and Telekinesis! The manual says it's for "picking locks" or something vague like that. But actually, it allows you to

pick up items without being physically near them. If you can see something, you can use the spell to add it to your inventory. Very handy if you've got things broiling in a room filled with firewalls, or if your favorite helm was dropped amidst a swarm of baddies.
Gillain: Teleport can be used instead of Telekinesis in some cases. 'Port across the four firewalls you just started, grab that amulet, and 'port back again. Beats running through the flames, or waiting for them to die down. Speaking of which, Firewall is one spell that you may not want to raise to too high a level. Waiting for them to burn out gets really tedious once you get up there in levels. I finally switched over to Flame Wave, which isn't as protective, but is loads of fun against hallways full of skeletons.

How have you found it to work together as partners? Any problems finding common ground as fighters from two different classes?
Gillain: Well, just as in any undertaking, cooperation is key. During our first forays, I took a lot of arrows in my butt, and being a pig-headed-fighter type I immediately blamed Carmina. After a while, though, I learned. Playing as a team, we warriors can't just charge into the middle of a room. We have to take the responsibility for leaving a clear line of fire for rogues and mages with their ranged weapons. I generally hug one wall, slightly ahead of Carmina. Most beasties will come at the first human they see. I engage them, and she can pick them off one by one.
Carmina: Rogues and mages have to be really careful about how they aim and where they position themselves within the combat group. If I'm working with Gillain on a cluster of monsters, I try to shoot from a position that is either 45° or 90° from him. This minimizes the chance of stray arrows hitting him. I aim extremely carefully and shoot far more slowly than if I were fighting alone. Remember, you only need to get one hit on a monster to share the exp points of its kill.
Gillain: Tristram isn't a perfect world. We each, in some ways, travel in our own planes, and sometimes those planes don't mesh perfectly. Mystics refer to this as Lag, and these days, almost every friendly fire death I suffer is a Lag Kill. For example, in the heat of battle I find myself in the middle of a room while Carm still sees me against the wall. She shoots at some monsters she thinks are clear but ends up killing me instead. You can tell a Lag Kill because you never see anything hit you. It's just "WHAM!" and you're dead. Fortunately when you die from friendly fire you don't drop any of your stuff. So as long as Carmina is carrying a resurrect scroll, no harm is done.

So that's the downside to multiplayer combat. But there's a lot of good that comes from fighting as a team. There are as many combo variations as there are teams. One mage friend of mine would cast Heal Other on me as I waded in amongst the baddies. Sadly, it's a harsh world and he got no exp for this selfless act. When Carmina and I are up against a tough foe, she hits him with Stone Curse while I pound on him.

Then there is mentoring. If one of us begins to advance levels more quickly than the other, the more experienced player will act as, um, a safety net. For instance, Carmina will follow me around, watch my back but let me get all the kills. She'll have a resurrect scroll ready in case I get in too deep, and her Heal Other for less drastic situations. The point is to protect your friend while letting him or her get all the exp for a while. If you're 3-4 levels above a friend, you can quickly bring him or her up to your level in this way. Mentoring doesn't get you much exp, but it does give you that warm gushy feeling inside, and it means you can continue to travel as a group without anyone being overmatched or totally bored.
Carmina: It certainly does take some practice to fight effectively in mixed groups. I can always tell when a player has been spending too much time working out alone or in single-player mode. He'll tend to hog all the kills he can and not share the money or the dropped items—not to mention frying fellow

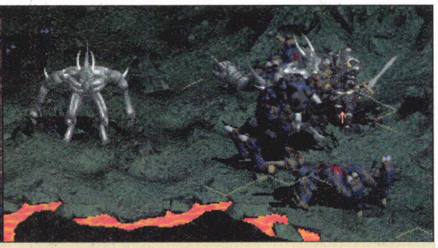
OR, PERHAPS, NOT

RISKY

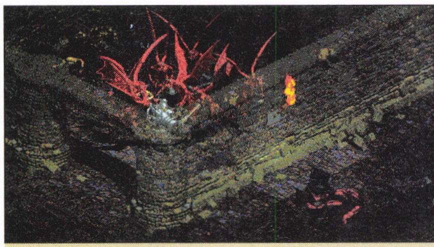
ENOUGH?

players with chain lightning a few times too many!

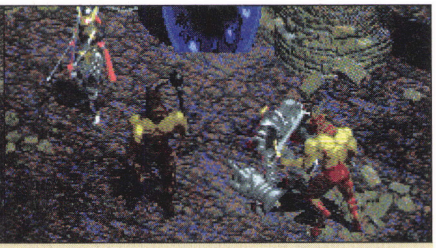
Gillain's high AC and lightning resistance can take this kind of punishment while Carmina's deadly arrows trash the bad guys



Again we see the mage safely across the lava casting stone curse, while the fighter busts things up

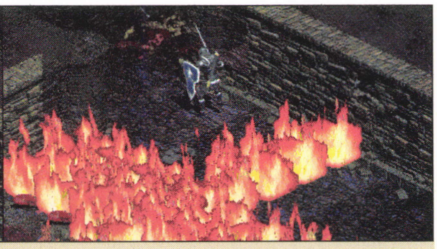


The gargoyle class of monsters can be easily managed by not doing this. Instead, approach them slowly, so as to "waken" only one or two at a time



This portal was cast to provide light for the picture. Generally its a bad idea to fight so close to a portal. If you die, the monsters will be there to ambush you as soon as you portal back down

Poor Flesh Clan. Caught between naked steel and a wall of fire



One can get easily carried away with the firewall spell...

What of Diablo? Is he as tough as people say he is?

Carmina: The last level is hard because Diablo is surrounded by swarms of bad guys that you could kill easily one-on-one, but in such large numbers they're difficult to handle. Diablo himself isn't too bad if you can position two players close to him and just start whacking away. If your hits are strong enough, he'll be stunned by them just like any other monster, and with two players going at it he'll not be able to move and hit back. But if he does move — boy, does he pack a punch. One of his hits drains my mana shield almost to empty — nearly 125 points!

But I actually think that killing Diablo is a highly-overrated sport in multiplayer. After killing him for that precious dot, doing it again seemed to me to be more bother than it's worth. After all, you don't get many experience points for the kill, and since the game ends immediately after he dies, you lose anything that you're not carrying at the time of the kill. Gillain and I lost extremely good weapons and tons of cash the first time we got Diablo because we'd left all our backup equipment and cash in town.

Gillain: Killing the ArchBishop, which you have to do before you can enter Diablo's level, is much more interesting and nearly as tough. He's got a few special succubi-types with him, plus a pack of Advocates teleporting around and making life generally miserable. He usually drops some trinket worth having too. Actually, Diablo also drops something, but you can never get to it before the game ends. Or at least, I never have.

By the way, if you're playing a multiplayer game alone, and you get killed on Diablo's level, the game ends. So be careful if you've left a ton of gold in town. When friends are with you, death on Diablo's level is almost meaningless, since you don't lose any of your stuff. Restart in town, get healed by Pepin and take a Portal down, and you're right back into the fray!

Do you have any favorite tools of the trade that you'd care to tell us about?

Gillain: Many an inn has been wrecked by brawls started over the question of what is the best weapon. I have a Lord's Sword of the Vampire, which I think is wonderful. This gives me a little mana each time I hit an opponent – effectively, unlimited mana. I love it. I don't need potions, and I don't need to worry about how expensive a spell is. Others say the King's Sword of Haste is *the* best weapon for a fighter, but since I've never found one, I can't comment. I will say that, as you progress through the game, especially in nightmare and hell games, you may find you need a Faster or Fastest weapon in order to get hits on the bad guys.

Carmina: At earlier levels in the game when my dex was below 70 or so, I found the best weapons were the various bows of lightning or fire that added a nice swipe of magic damage to whatever else I was able to dish out physically. But on harder levels the magic damage makes less of a difference. I need a bow that both augments damage and increases overall stats. My Savage Bow of the Heavens, for example, increases all my attribs by +11, and increases my damage by +113%, and it's gotten me through many, many trips into Hell. The increased stats allow me to wear heavier armor, too, which is always a plus.

Gillain: Speaking of resistance, it's worth your while to ask your partners what their favorite spells or weapons are, and wear rings and amulets that gives you resistance to that kind of effect. I find a lot of mages love chain lightning, and Carmina had a bow that did lightning damage for a while. I'd always wear rings (and I advise keeping a variety of different rings and amulets to mix and match) that gave me maximum resistance to lightning. Saved me from many an errant bolt, let me tell ya!

Okay with all this talk of weapons and armour, time to 'fess up here. How did you get your best equipment?

Carmina: I've either found it in the game or bought it from Griswold the blacksmith. I know I'm a stickler, but I don't trade items with players unless I'm sure they just found them in the game we're playing. I know cheating and duping items is pretty much the rule on Battle.net, but I just can't see the sport in playing the game with equipment that's so far above your level that it makes you immune to damage. It's got to get pretty boring.

I've actually ended up buying most of my best stuff. I'm still trying to figure out how Griswold chooses the items that he offers us. It seems to depend on what type of player started the game and how many players there are. There's also a distinct difference in the stuff he offers once you hit level 20 and level 30.

Wirt the Squirt occasionally has good items but they're always overpriced. I don't know if many people realize this, but you can bargain his prices down. If Wirt's holding an item you want to buy, note the sale price and then walk away from him. Figure out how much the item would cost with a 33% discount, then go back to him carrying *exactly* that amount of gold plus the 50 gold pieces to pay him for looking. He'll sell the item to you without protest, even though the asking price doesn't change.

Gillain: Amulets and rings, which are essential for successful adventuring, can *only* be found in the dungeons. Griswold will buy them, but he won't sell 'em. We've been told (though this is hard to quantify) that the very best items are found in the Hell levels of a Nightmare game. Not a Hell game, as you might assume. And it *does* seem to matter who starts the game. The dungeon set-up seems to skew itself to be most difficult for the type of player who started it, and vice versa. If I start a game, we seem to come across more magic books than if a mage starts it, for instance. But we'll also have a lot more creatures with range weapons (a fighter's nightmare).

By the way, the witch changes her wares every time you come into town, so it's worth a stop by her hut, assuming you have some cash. She may have a spell book, or an elixir (which raises one stat permanently) for sale.

What about when you lose these tools. That is, if a party gets wiped out deep in a dungeon.

Gillain: Carmina and I both generally carry a second set of equipment, so we're usually OK. Sometimes, though, things go all to hell (no pun intended) and we get killed twice. When this happens, you can do one of two things. You can make multiple trips down, casting offensive spells to hopefully take out a beast or two before you get killed, or you can just go streaking. Streaking refers to going down completely naked and running from the beasties, picking up as much stuff as you can find before they kill you. Since you don't drop what's in your inventory, when you restart in town, you'll still have that stuff. The only flaw is that, when empty-handed, you'll wield any weapon you pick up. For that reason, it's sometimes worthwhile to buy a dagger or something from Griswold. You'll lose it, but so what?

Carmina: Here's another tactic to try. Sometimes it happens that your war party gets swarmed by particularly tough beasts right at the entrance to the level, before you even have a chance to fight. In this case, go back down naked and cast a town portal as soon as you arrive, as far away from the pack as possible. You'll probably get killed, but no big deal. Then send one member of your party naked down through the portal and another through the original entrance. Usually the monsters will swarm whomever appears on the level first. The other player will get a chance to scavenge for the dropped items (don't forget that Telekinesis spell) while the decoy is killed. Repeat a few dozen times, and voilà, you've got your stuff back! (No one said this was easy.)

Gillain: We call this the "Lambs to Slaughter" gambit. Casting a portal should always be one of the first things you do when you get onto a level you're unsure of. Again, as far from the stairs as you can safely get it before you start exploring.

Any other wisdom you'd like to offer our audience?

Gillain: Yes. I'd like to talk about *Diablo*'s most horrific beastie. The one death you cannot be resurrected from: a changing Windows 95 registry. See, in an attempt to prevent players from hacking their characters (an attempt which failed, obviously) Blizzard decided to store Diablo characters in the registry. Certain changes can wipe out those characters. I installed network cards and IPX drivers in our machines once, and all our characters completely vanished. We were *not* happy.

There are backup programs out there, and I encourage you to use them, just in case. We use DiaBack, and it seems to work well.

Carmina: Drag your system over to your friend's place for some side by side LAN play. Diablo really shines when you can shout for help and curse at each other. It is, at its most basic, a social activity, which is why it's so popular in my opinion. Find a group of regular adventurers and stick with them. You're bound to make some friends.

And speaking of friends, we'd like to thank Splusmer, Sengir Dragon, Relp and Auzette Niko for all the shared advice and adventuring over the past few months. Come visit us on the *CGS+* Online Forum at **www.cdmag.com/forum/forum.html.**

–Peter Smith and Elaine Benfatto

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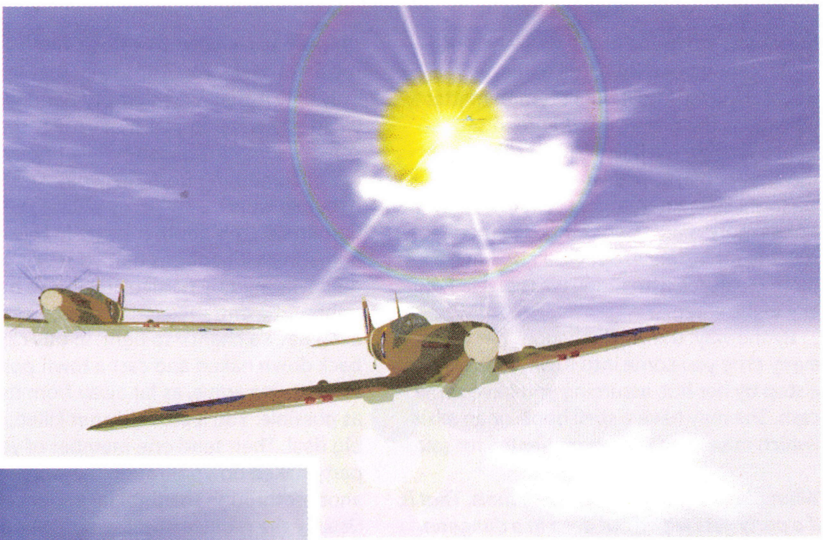
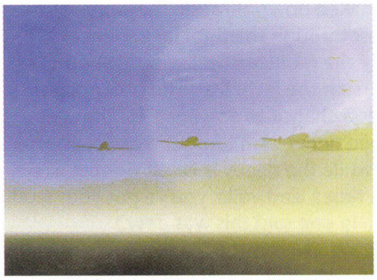
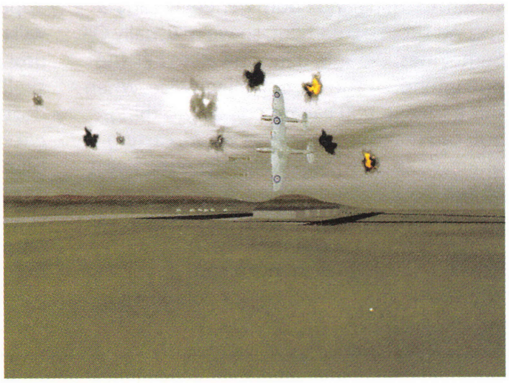
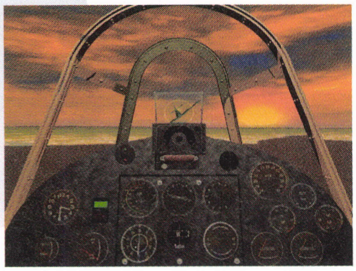
The Hangar

Air Progress: Pro-Line Software pushes the envelope in Tactical Aero Squadron









[top to bottom] **Spitfires in flight. You'll find extremely detailed and accurate modeling. Prepare to learn where to set the mixture and how many shots of prime to give a Merlin if you want it to start; TAS will feature some nice graphics effects. Here are a few 109's getting bounced by Spits coming out of the sun. The "sun-blind" effect is both realistic and effective; A pair of Spits raiding the Abbeville field. The terrain map is accurate and so are the installations. Note the nicely detailed flak explosions; An accurately detailed Spit cockpit. The gauges are historically correct and in the right places. No generic cockpits here!**

Be grateful for those who wonder "Why not?" Without *Flight Simulator* to start the "What if?" process, there probably would have been no *Air Warrior* or *Warbirds*. Now, another group of dreamers and doers is attempting to raise the bar to new and greater heights.

Tentatively titled *Tactical Aero Squadron*, this multi-player, Internet-based game will initially focus on the Battle of Britain. The follow-on expansion should add the Full European War.

Paul Hinds is the technical wizard behind the project. A former Air Force F-16 pilot with doctoral degrees in Aeronautical, Astronautical and Electrical Engineering, Paul owns and flies his own P-51, and has flown several other WWII fighters. His partner, Michael Hobuss, is a dedicated on-line flight simulation fanatic. Mike may hold the record for the highest monthly *Air Warrior* bill ever recorded. Together they have the expertise and experience to design an accurate, interesting game. They've created Pro-Line Software (web.nwark.com/proline) to implement their dream.

The partners focused on three areas they feel are deficient in current on-line WWII air combat sims. The flight and projectile models are of the "full physics" type, and emphasis has been placed on creating a meaningful strategic environment.

Pro-Line took a unique approach to building a realistic, accurate flight model. First, the P-51 model was constructed using known, historically accurate statistics, like airfoil data and other parameters. The model was flown through various maneuvers on the computer. Paul then saddled up in his actual P-51 and compared the model to that. He made sure that the computer P-51 reacted exactly as the real Mustang did. The Bf-109 was next, using the only German wartime-manufactured, true Bf-109 still flying. The Spitfire model was verified against flight in an actual Spit. The premise of creating an accurate theoretical aerodynamic model using known factors was thus validated against these actual aircraft. Paul can now model any aircraft for which the required factors are available.

In any 'net based game, you may hose a bandit and one of your shot packets could get lost in cyberspace. *Tactical Aero Squadron* will look at the shot packets before and after the missing one and average the results. This feature should reduce the "shooting blanks" phenomena that can occur in other on-line games. Additionally, every projectile uses a full physics flight model, comparing firing point, impact point and anything in between with the known ballistics of the weapon. The damage created when it hits is determined by "real world" factors: type of projectile, distance, energy, penetration, and target hardness are all considered. For example, you might hit the 20mm ammo drum on a Hawker Hurricane. It sits near the fuel tank just outside the wing center section. It will explode, possibly penetrating the fuel tank and potentially causing a secondary explosion. The modeling of such aircraft design characteristics is detailed and accurate.

The strategic aspects of the game should prove to be another breakthrough in on-line air combat. When you begin to play you will choose either the Allied or Axis side. You won't be allowed to change for the duration of that campaign. Campaigns will mimic specific periods during the war, such as the Battle of Britain. During these periods, historically accurate strategic objectives will be issued to each side. Each side will have a "morale factor" based on achieving these objectives. A high morale factor provides numerous benefits. It accelerates the delivery of newer aircraft, repairs to war-weary planes, and much more. Did I forget to mention that your aircraft is subject to the cumulative stresses of air combat? It's a very, very detailed game model and a far cry from the usual, simplistic "capture the flag" substitute for strategy.

The artwork is driven by a highly optimized 256 color engine. Users with 2D video cards will be flying against sprite-like entities designed and optimized to look like 3D models. If you have a 3D accelerator card, you'll be flying against 3D models that represent the modeled airplanes fairly well.

As of this writing, the game was about to enter the Beta test phase. Several hundred vets of various on-line ACM arenas are doing the testing. If all goes well, look for *Tactical Aero Squadron* to debut on-line late in the fourth quarter. *–John Nolan*

Air Combat Advisor

Part II: Making the BnZ work

We left off discussing the Zoom extension counting method. Let's talk about how to arrive at a good reference number to count to. Because there are so many ways to Zoom, it would be difficult to cite an absolute number to use. Knowing when to do your reversals is really more art than science. Nevertheless, here are some general guidelines:

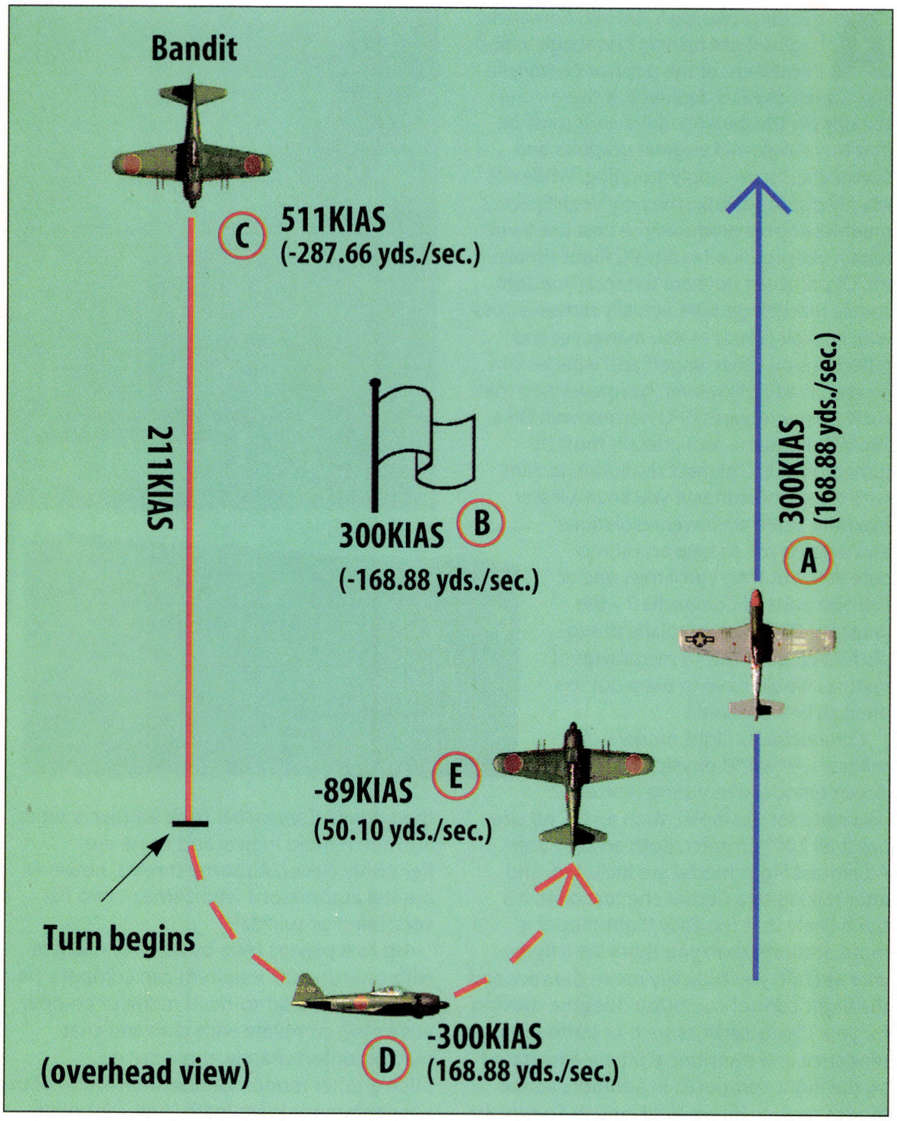
Count em' out

I hate to bog this column down with math (and you certainly don't want to be doing math in your head during an air battle), but to illustrate the theory behind the Zoom extension counting method, we have no choice. (I'll keep it brief – promise). If you figure a rough average initial BnZ airspeed at the merge is at least 300 KIAS, the minimum count should be in the 30 to 40 second range. Let's look at how we came up with that number.

Math bath

Okay, to fly 1 KPH, we'd travel 101.33 fpm (6,080'/60). So, at 300 KIAS (although TAS would be more accurate), we'd travel 506.56fps or 168.88 yards/sec. (101.33*300/60/3). In order to extend 2,500 yards, it'd take about 15 seconds (14.8 seconds to be exact) to reach that distance – that is, *if* your reference point is standing still and you're not grabbing E.

As you know, enemy aircraft never stay still (unless they've become a lawn dart or fish food). So if we calculate the turning ability of one of the best turning planes around – the Zero – we can conclude at the very best (for the Zero), he can turn 180° in about 3 seconds (max. instantaneous turn rate is 78°/sec., which is impossible to hold, but good for worst case scenario calculations because it's far better to over extend than to turn back too early). This means, in the worst terms, you can only separate at the 168.88 yards/sec. figure for three seconds. From there on in, your separation speed advantage dwindles. Still with me?



Traveling at 300 KIAS (A), your closure rate to a stationary object will be 168.88yds/sec. (B). If you BnZ a bandit traveling at 211 KIAS, your closure rate increases to 287.66 yds/sec. (or separation decreases at that rate, depending on how you want to look at it) (C). If the bandit turns, your separation rate increases (roughly) back to 168.88 yds/sec. (D). However, after the bandit completes his turn, your separation rate drops to 50.10 yds/sec. (E)

Now, if we now assume that the Zero pilot is worth his salt and turns at corner speed of 211 KIAS, he can chase you at roughly 2/3 our zoom speed after his turn in short order. This decreases your speed advantage to a paltry 89 KIAS. In order to achieve the 2,500 yard separation at this rate, this works out to 50 seconds (actually 49.9 based on 50.10 yards/sec.). Note that it's even longer if you Zoom climb (figure an average speed of about 230 KIAS for you). So, subtract the 3 seconds of turning time at the 168.88 yards/sec. rate (506.64 yards), which leaves the remaining 2,000 yards at 50.10 yards/sec. rate and 10.69 yards/sec. if you Zoom climb. This works out to a whopping 42 to 187.9 seconds respectively – which could explain why BnZing hasn't worked well for some.

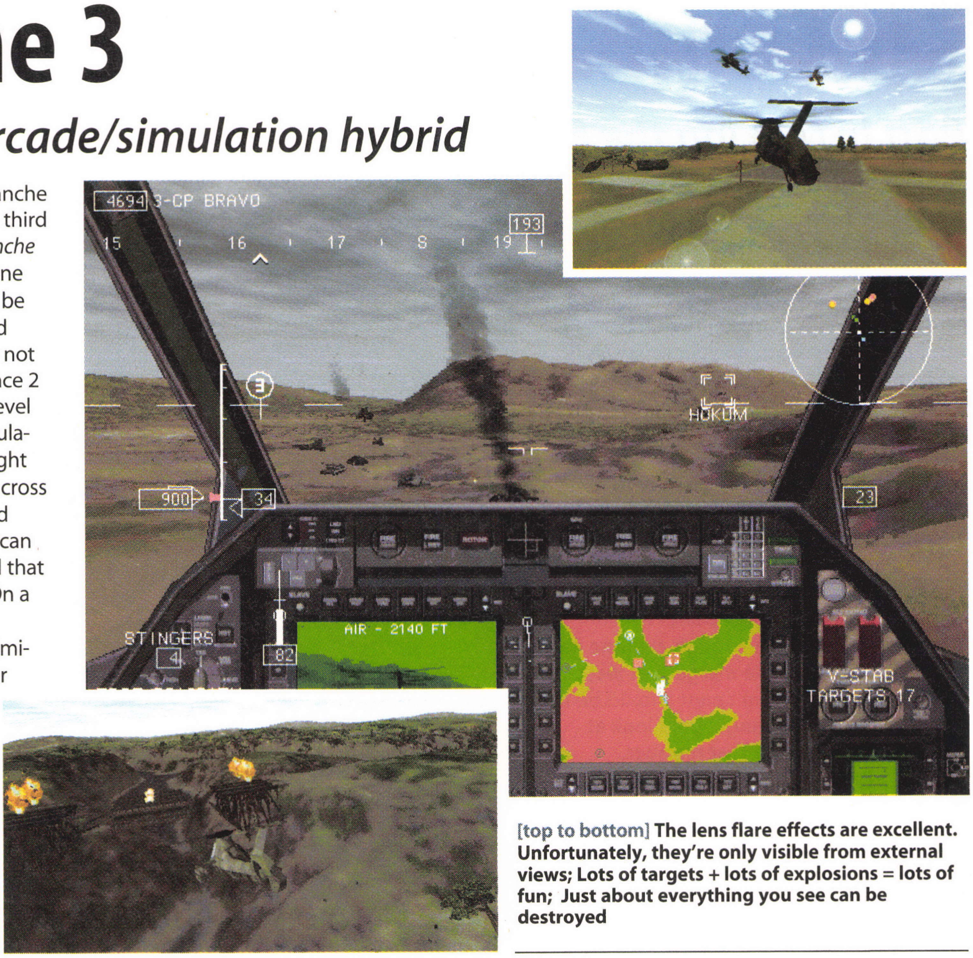
The real deal

Fortunately, what we've illustrated is a worse case scenario (well, it could get worse, we'll get to that later); your runs are probably slightly faster, and no opponent consistently turns that fast without cheating. However, at best, with a dive at 325 KIAS (Zoom average 250 KIAS) against an enemy who turns 25°/sec. at 100 KIAS, it will still take a *minimum* of 24.80 seconds to achieve 2,500 yards separation. That's how we came up with the 30 second count mentioned at the top. Naturally, as we mentioned last time, you'd add time if your opponent turns early on you and more as your airspeed drops. Again, these are just calculations and where the "art" of timing comes into play. We'll discuss that and other reversal timing methods next time. *–Ben Chiu*

Comanche 3

Still an excellent arcade/simulation hybrid

As Boeing/Sikorsky's RAH-66 Comanche begins flight testing, NovaLogic's third installment of the popular *Comanche* line, *Comanche 3,* is deployed. If there's one constant in the gaming universe, it must be that NovaLogic makes great graphics and *Comanche 3*'s are simply stunning. While not exactly photo-realistic, the new VoxelSpace 2 graphics engine produces the best low level terrain yet produced in any PC flight simulator. Of particular note are the real-time light source renderings; light actually moves across your cockpit panels as you maneuver and reflections on other aircraft and vehicles can be seen readily. However, be forewarned that such artistry requires CPU horsepower. On a 166MHz Pentium, some details must be turned off at the highest resolution to eliminate the slight stutter. If you have a lesser machine, there are lower resolutions and detail levels to help accommodate you, but then you'll miss one of the best parts of *Comanche 3* – the graphics. (There are no plans to support 3D cards as the 16 megabytes of textures would have to swap out too often to be beneficial.)



[top to bottom] The lens flare effects are excellent. Unfortunately, they're only visible from external views; Lots of targets + lots of explosions = lots of fun; Just about everything you see can be destroyed

Comanche 3's flight model now reflects real world physics, but it doesn't model everything (vortex ring state for example); then again, no sim has it all 100% correct. Both an Easy and Advanced flight model are included, and after talking to a Comanche test pilot, it's quite likely that the Easy flight model is more accurate than you think. As a fly-by-wire aircraft, you basically move the stick and the flight control computer does the moving for you. Characteristics such as translating tendency and transitional lift are eliminated by the flight computer. In addition, actual modes such as Hover Hold (which *Comanche 3* cheats with the wind a bit), Vertical Stabilization, and Altitude Lock have all been modeled. However, Velocity Stabilization and the ability to do loops and rolls are absent (a design decision favoring frame rate over, as the test pilot put it, "Maneuvers unauthorized by the Army and the manufacturer"). It's easy to live with the Angle of Attack limitations; however, the inability to roll past 45 degrees will bother some.

There are 32 missions, in four theaters ranging from the arctic to the desert (plus 5 for training), that encompass a good mix of interesting challenges and night sorties. Each theatre models 80 sq. miles with destroyable trees that aren't much help for hiding behind. Gameplay is the familiar shoot and kill, but the ground-based enemy drones now seem to have logical mission routes instead of the idiotic paths seen in the original *Comanche*. Their emplacements also seem more logical and some are fiendishly clever. Airborne threats, however, are still automatons who come in two flavors: blind or suicidal.

Up to 8 players (two by serial or modem with only one CD required) can compete via IPX in timed head-to-head mode or co-operative play, complete with chat and chat macros; unfortunately, there are no pilot/gunner modes. Offline, interaction with your computer team mate (Army lingo for the wingman) is limited to passing him targets; his abilities range from brilliant to absurdly moronic, a trait not uncommon with other products.

The Dolby Surround Sound samples are neat, but their implementations are sometimes "antiseptic" (the chirping birds are just plain hokey), causing them to have an artificial, simplified feel – a thread repeated throughout the game. For instance, some systems have been simplified or left out. Granted, a 21st century, fly-by-wire, marvel of technology would simplify designs to lighten pilot workload, but features such as the HMD (Helmet Mounted Display) Threat Display were created by NovaLogic in the interest of gameplay (the MFDs are too small to be useful and some of the real systems are classified, while others have not been developed yet). While you and the enemy now have realistic weapons loads and ranges, target damage modeling is exaggerated (you can level buildings with the 20mm chain gun), and you cannot change waypoints or choose your loadouts.

Advances in the simulation aspect of the game have been made, but *Comanche 3* remains an arcade hybrid due to its pre-flight and cockpit management/systems simplifications, arcade AI, and optimistic mission goals. Not that these are bad things – these features are exactly what has made the *Comanche* series so endearing. While narrow in scope and depth, what the game models, it generally models well (FanTail performance is actually undermodeled).

If you're looking for a challenge and have the hardware (or can stand lower resolution and detail levels) *Comanche 3* rocks; it's polished and looks fantastic. On the other hand, if you're looking for a "serious" helicopter combat simulation that sweats system procedures and mission details, you'll need to look elsewhere. *–Ben Chiu*

★★★★☆

Comanche 3

NovaLogic • www.novalogic.com • Requirements: DOS, Fast Pentium, 16 MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • MultiPlayer: 2-8 players, LAN, modem, null modem

F/A-18 Hornet 3.0

A solid entrance into the world of PC simulators

Every so often an unheralded product will show up that turns out to be a real eye-opener. *F/A-18 Hornet 3.0* is Graphic Simulations Corporation's first foray into the PC sim market and it is a very pleasant surprise. Not that GSC is lacking in sim experience, having released three successful versions of the F/A-18 on the Macintosh. Designed for the experienced flight sim pilot this product has most all the standard features you have come to expect in a flight sim and more.

Detail is the name of game in *Hornet 3.0,* and with three previous iterations to build on, most have been thoroughly addressed. From the fresnel lens system ("meatball") on the carrier to the beautiful full-screen cockpit display complete with moving maps and digital displays, even the minute details are carefully portrayed. Everything from inlet temperature to engine vibration is monitored on the Digital Display Indicators (DDIs) and the amount of information available can be overwhelming .

Of course with all the detail involved, this sim ends up being somewhat complex and could be quite daunting for a beginner. The manual, which is rather short and desperately needs an index and glossary, is laid out and reads like an actual Department of Defense document. To help get you up to speed there are excellent tutorials built right into the sim, covering such topics as carrier landings, air-to-ground attacks, and navigation. These training tutorials come up on a mock TV/VCR and give actual sim camera footage as well as informative blackboard diagrams to help explain various aspects of the F/A-18.

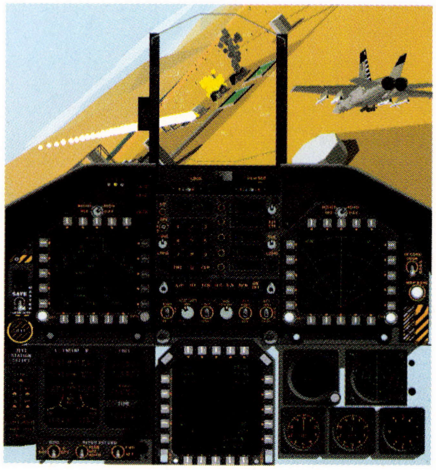
Graphically this games is very clean, giving great frame rates on even mid-range Pentiums, but do not expect some of the photo-realistic terrain that is now appearing in such titles as *Jetfighter 3 or F-22 Lightning II*. This sim is more akin to *A-10 Cuba* or *Hind*, using polygons rather than Gouraud shading used in *ATF* or *USNF*. Ground detail is plain but consistent with the Kuwait theater and the various planes and buildings are recognizable for what they are

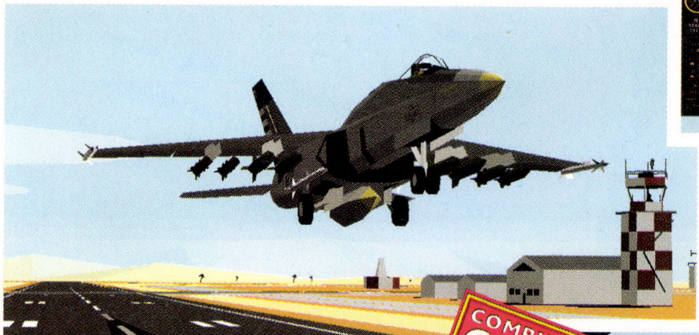
Do not be fooled by the slightly outdated graphics, however; the flight model on this baby is excellent and after several hours of flying around you can almost imagine you are in the real thing. Landing on the carrier for the first time with the Landing Signal Officer giving you verbal directions as you focus on the meatball is quite an exhilarating experience. There is great sense of engine power when flying around, especially when you kick in the afterburners and get the satisfying muffled roar; the little details are what make this sim fun. I cannot ever remember playing another sim where I was waved off on a landing because of traffic on the flight deck.

Most all features that are routinely expected in a flight sim are present in this one: video replays, multiple views including padlock, network and modem play, taxiing on runways, excellent control of wingmen, radio messages and a wide variety of ordnance. HARMs make an appearance in this sim as well as a few tactical nukes, all assigned on a very well designed ordnance screen.

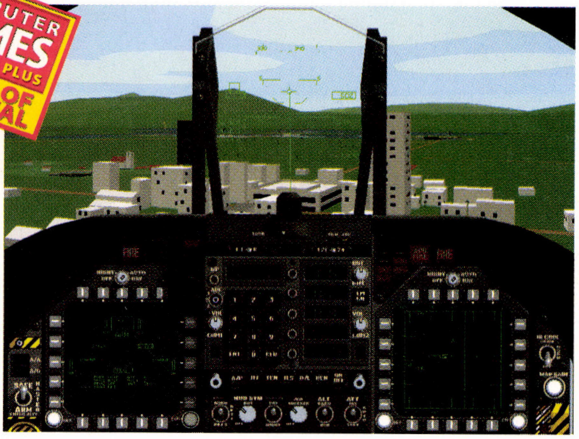
Though a great deal of attention was spent on details there some general areas that are lacking. First and most important are the number of missions; there only 28, playable as a single campaign or individually. Though there are also six multiplayer and training missions, there is no mission builder/editor and thus the hard drive "life" of this sim may turn out to be rather short. Mission briefings are also short and non-descriptive, with no detailed maps or information given out. Debriefing consist of only a dot-matrix printout to the screen showing number of kills; very life-like but not that useful, especially when compared to other sims. Missions tend to be very difficult with plenty of SAMs to make life difficult and an enemy pilot AI that can be very challenging in a dogfight.

F/A-18 Hornet 3.0 is an excellent flight sim for someone looking for a serious and challenging flying experience. Though a little short on missions and slightly dated graphically, it is fun, interesting, and full of surprises. GSC has made a solid entrance into the world of PC simulators. *–Jim Pedicord*





COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS STAMP OF APPROVAL



[top to bottom] **Full instrumentation view as you begin your assault**

External view of a fully loaded Hornet being brought in for a landing

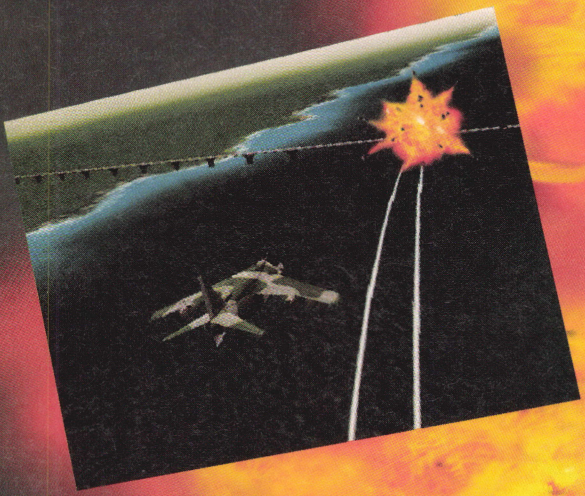
Airborne over a major city

★★★★☆

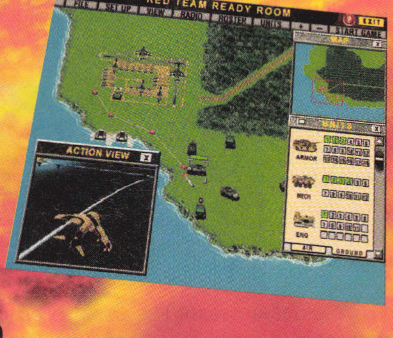
F/A-18 Hornet 3.0

Graphic Simulations Corporation • www.graphsim.com • Requirements: Windows 95, Pentium, 8MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM; MacOS, 60MHz PowerPC or higher, 16MB RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-4 players, LAN, modem

A NEW OF FLIGHT SIM IS EXPLODING ON THE SCENE.



Flying Nightmares 2 isn't just the next great flight sim. It's a new kind of flight sim. One where you'll need a lot more than quick reflexes to survive. You'll need a great strategy as well. Without one, you're going to eat the blast of enemy afterburners.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INTERACTIVE

Air Warrior II

Spitfires over London, bombs over Berlin

With six complete campaigns, *Air Warrior II* offers challenges in all areas of World War II military aviation. The first rule when playing one of these campaigns is to thoroughly go through the mission briefings, keeping track of what possible enemies might be in the battle region. Remember also that complete success in a single mission is not always needed. The mission path you follow in a campaign has branches, and by "losing" certain missions you can travel different paths in your quest to complete a campaign.

If any mission is particularly tough you can use the mission editor to check out all the details of the mission: number of enemies and their flight paths, mission objectives and enemy skill levels. Each campaign is located in its own folder under the MISSIONS directory. A little trial and error should enable you to figure out specific missions. Most are organized by their historic date. Following are some more general strategies for surviving each of the campaigns in the game.

11th Group

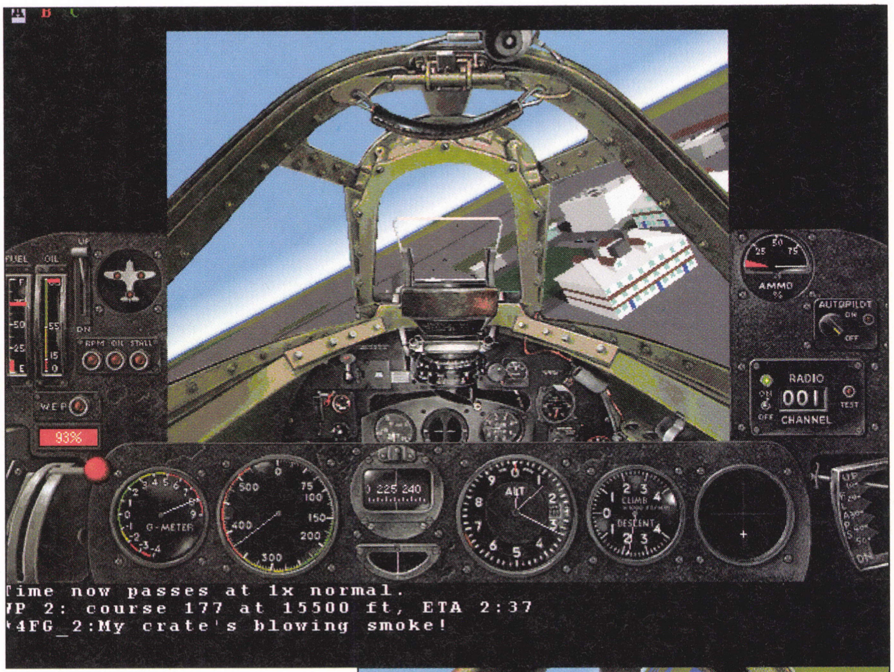
The Hawker Hurricane and Spitfire MK I are your assigned plane in this campaign, both very adequate for their assigned missions. Both of these planes have a very good turn radius and this advantage should be used when engaging the Bf 109E-3s, which are abundant in these missions. In comparison with the Messerschmitts, however, the British aircraft has a lower maximum speed and a slower rate of climb, making it vulnerable when dogfighting at high speeds. Limited ammunition supply is another important factor with these aircraft, especially when the game preferences are set to the realistic mode. The success of a mission may often depend on having a few shots left for the primary objective, so always make sure that an enemy is well within range before firing your guns.

Missions in this campaign vary greatly. Starting off, your Hurricane will be patrolling the skies of France at the beginning of the Blitzkrieg, finding and engaging any enemies encountered. In these earlier encounters make sure that any German bombers are taken out quickly, as these are usually the primary objective of your mission. If outgunned by enemy fighters it is often best to disengage the battle and return to your assigned route and landing field as this will still bring you some points. Being shot down will definitely hurt your score for the mission!

The last part of the campaign, taking part in September of 1940, is the most difficult. In these missions you might be starting as wing leader or even a squadron leader in the 54th or 257th squadrons, defending the skies of England in the Battle of Britain. German bombers in these missions are always a primary or secondary target; so if at all possible try to evade the escorting Messerschmitts and concentrate fire power on the more vulnerable bombers. Successfully destroying the bombers and surviving the battles should assure high point totals and completion of this campaign.

Fourth but first

Escort and sweep missions highlight this campaign and there are various strategies for both. When escorting a group of bombers make sure you keep an eye on any radio reports or visual confirmation of enemies in the area. Intercepting a group of enemy fighters as far away from the group of bombers is key to keeping them alive and giving you a high score. If in command of a group, make sure you give orders to attack any enemies in the vicinity, enabling you to take on any remaining fighters closing in on the escorted group.



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ime now passes at 1x normal.
P 2: course 177 at 15500 ft, ETA 2:37
4FG_2:My crate's blowing smoke!
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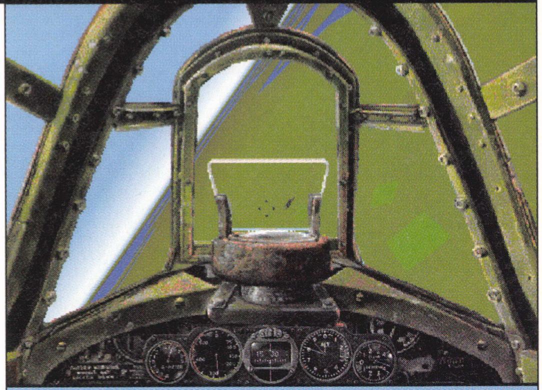
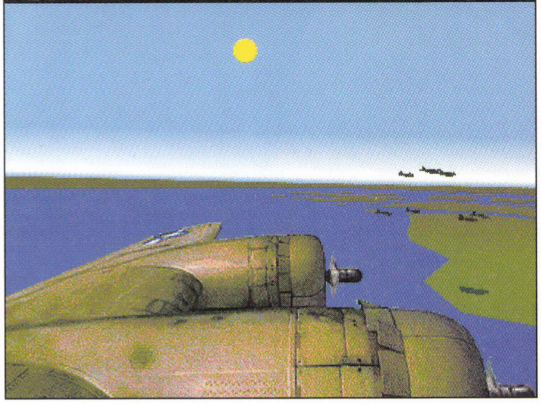




[top to bottom]

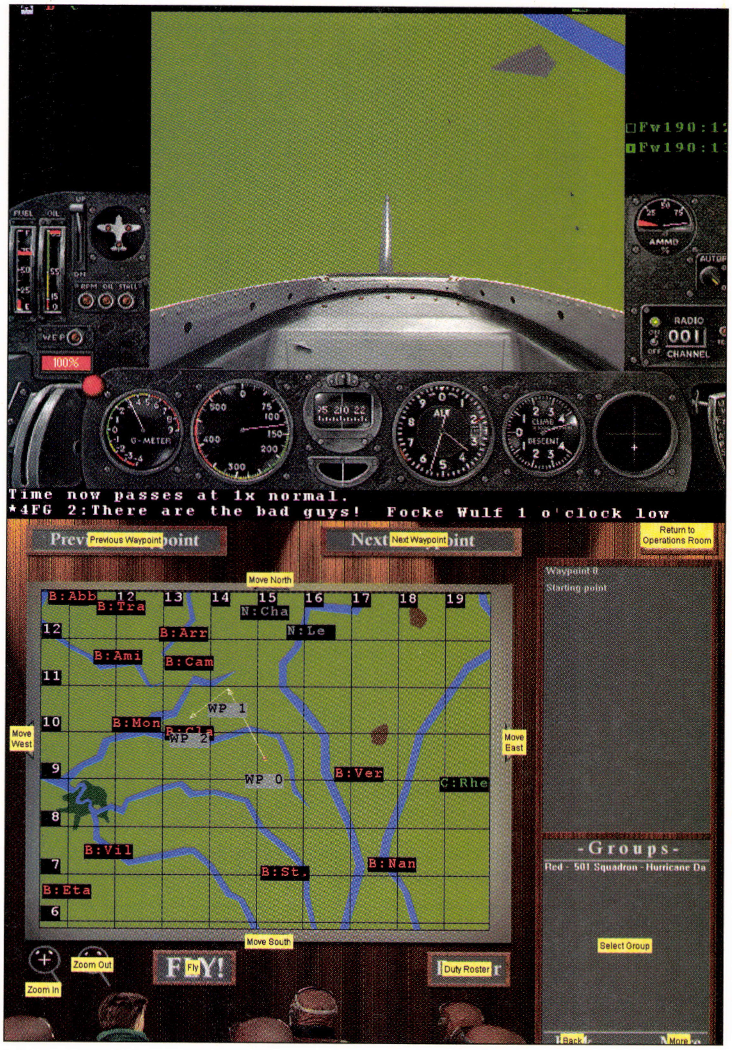
Moving in for a strafing attack

Use the F7 key to switch to full-screen mode when involved in a dogfight

Keep B-17s in formation as much as possible to defend against enemy fighters

Sweeps and patrols generally have a goal of finding and destroying any enemies in the area, making it easier for the bombers to make it through at a later time. Watch your ammo and make sure you do not leave yourself short at the end of a sweep, especially in the P-47D which you will fly later on in the campaign. Strafing of ground targets, especially aircraft, will play heavily in several missions and care must be taken when approaching such targets as there will often be anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) in the area. Make quick and random joystick and rudder movements to avoid this fire and then go in low for a quick strafing run on the ground targets. Pull up hard after getting the shots off and then, if necessary, come around for another attack. The Thunderbolt and Mustang can take more damage when performing strafing runs while the Spitfire, not nearly as rugged, needs to be handled with more care.

Later on in the campaign, after using the P-47D for a good ten missions, P-51Ds will become the exclusive plane in the last 20+ missions. On long missions make sure that ammo conservation is a very high priority in the mission. Stay close to the bombers, preferably at a slightly higher altitude, so a threat may be quickly dealt with at a good distance from the group. If you succeed in these missions you will soon find yourself winging your way over Berlin, finishing up the destruction of the Luftwaffe.



Time now passes at 1x normal.
*4FG 2:There are the bad guys! Focke Wulf 1 o'clock low

[top to bottom] **Always check your six when engaging enemies**

The Briefing Map and waypoints should be thoroughly examined before starting a mission

The Offensive

With this campaign exclusively using bombers there is need for different strategies. The most important tip when flying the B-17G is to familiarize yourself thoroughly with the commands to shift to the various gunner positions on the plane. The computer gunners are not that great, and player operation generally leads to more kills and successful missions. By being able to quickly switch to different positions on the plane you can maximize your firepower towards any enemy aircraft in the area and greatly improve your chances of survival. If you are a group leader, keep track of the other bombers in your group and give them appropriate commands to attack enemy aircraft when encountered. Try to keep visual and radar contact with all enemies encountered so you can switch to the appropriate gunner position when an enemy is within range.

Make sure to keep at the specified altitudes given in the briefings when making your bombing runs. Altitudes and flight paths are specifically set up to avoid as much enemy fire as possible. If enemy resistance is light around the target cut the throttle slightly, thus making it easier to line up your target in the bomb-sight.

Bombing can be difficult to master, especially when under heavy attack, so don't be afraid to re-try the first several missions to get the hang of it. Concentrate on being able to quickly switch to the bomb-sight (after repelling enemy fighters with guns), drop your stack, and then switch back to the various gunner positions. With enough practice even the toughest target can be hit and destroyed and this will ensure high marks in your mission and campaign.

Adlerangriff

This German campaign is similar to the Allied "Fourth but First" with most missions being of the sweep and escort variety. Similar tactics may be used in this one but also remember that your Messerschmitts have much better speed ratings than the Spitfires and Hurricanes you will face. Use this speed to your advantage and keep from getting into slow speed turns where the British aircraft are superior.

When escorting JU 87s and JU 88s stay well above your bombers and keep an eye out for any interceptors. Try to dispatch any British planes quickly for more groups will probably be showing up soon.

JG 2 Richthofen

Taking place during the last several years of the war, the missions in this campaign use Focke Wulfs and Messerschmitts to repel the allies in the skies over France and Germany. One major point to keep in mind is that near the end of this campaign, pilots and fuel will be in short supply. Veteran wingmates will be rare and morale will not always be high. Be prepared to take out primary objectives yourself and do not presume that your wingmen will be around at the end of a large battle.

Survival is also a key element in many of these missions and quite often is a primary objective. If things are looking bad, check out secondary objectives and try to keep you and your wingmen alive.

Battle over Germany

Defending against American B-17 bombers is the objective in this campaign and quite a difficulty it may be! Wingmen are generally average in these missions so be prepared to do the majority of the work yourself.

When intercepting keep your speed high, avoid the escorts, and move in for quick kills against the B-17's. Watch for fire coming from the gunners on the bombers and make sure you don't get in-between several in formation were they can fix their guns on you. Try hitting the outside or end plane in a formation so there are fewer guns to worry about at one time. Finally, keep a close watch on the ammunition levels and make sure you leave plenty for use on the bombers. *–Jim Pedicord*

NCAA Final Four 97

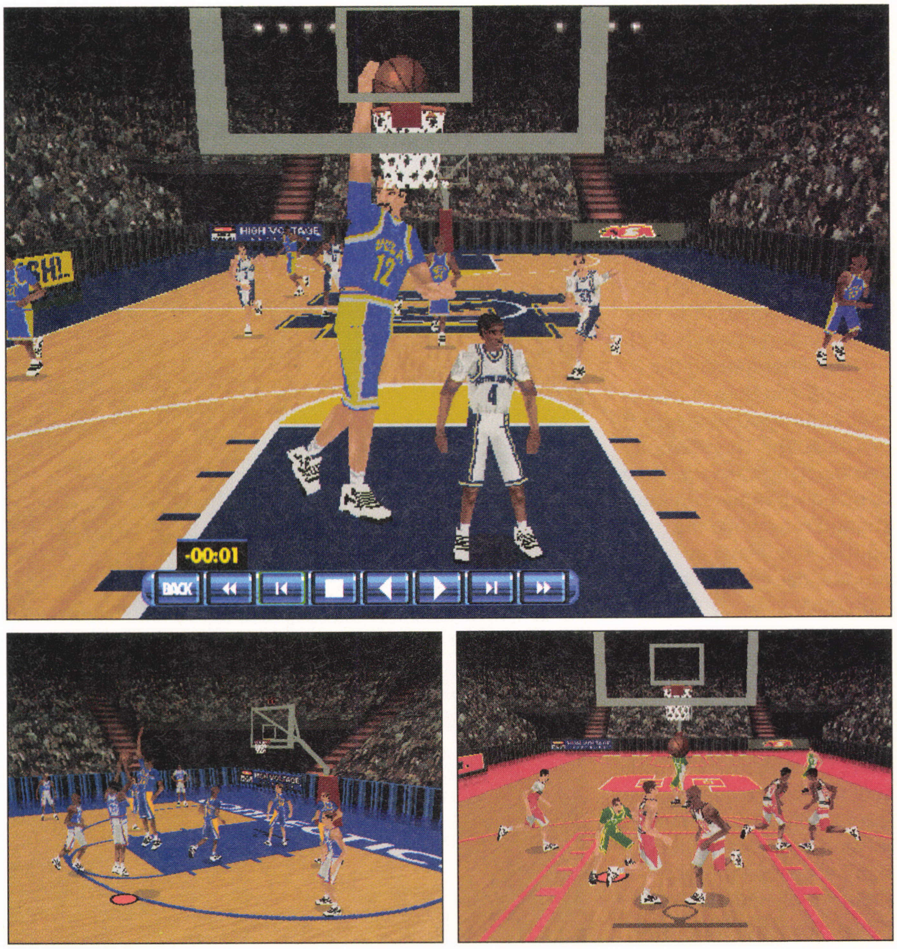
Where March Madness can cause much madness for sports fans

None really likes to write a bad review of a game that showed much promise throughout its development. However, it's obvious that *NCAA Final Four 97* was rushed out to capitalize on the hysteria and, pardon the pun, "hoop-la" surrounding March Madness (the 64 team NCAA Tournament, for the sports-challenged). With motion-captured polygonal players and a less in-you-face look than *NBA Live 97*, there was much to be excited over. After a few minutes of playing, you'll find that the controls are smooth as silk, without the excessive momentum of *NBA Live 97*, and you can configure all of controls to suit your favorite setup. The game looks good, with smooth animation, and by halftime of your first game, you may be thinking that this is a pretty good game. Too bad you have to play the second half.

Final Four 97 allows you to play any one of 64 NCAA teams (not based on the 1997 Final Four) over the course of a 30 game season, or cut right to the chase and play the NCAA tournament. In typical fashion, you can simulate a game, take control of the team, or have limited coaching functions while watching. You can assign simple plays to function keys, but it's unlikely that it will make any difference because of the incredibly poor AI and game logic. Most of the problems become obvious in your first hour with the game, which always begs the question, "Did anyone play this thing before it was released?" You can start with the absurd – being able to pump fake your way from the free-throw line all the way to the basket (the game switches your pivot foot, moving you in random directions), move to the obvious – an AI that allows fast-breaks on almost every in-bounds play, and end with the obscure – being able avoid three-second calls by continuously pump faking in the key.

But why bother pump faking when you'll rarely miss any of your shots, most of which are slam dunks? When you finally attempt a three-pointer, no one crashes the boards, regardless of your offensive settings, and when you miss, you tend to *really* miss, rarely drawing iron. There are plenty of special slam-dunk animations, but the game couldn't squeeze in a simple fade-away jump-shot. When one of the rare shooting fouls occur, you'll find that free-throws require no skill – just press the button and the game determines whether or not the shot goes in.

Other problems include a computer opponent that can't deal with the two-minute drill in a close game and the improper use of the game clock during that same time. While it's true that most games can't run a decent two-minute drill (shoot, then foul, shoot, then foul), the clock issue is particularly aggravating. During the latter portions of the game, it continues to run after a made basket, and nothing is more frustrating than watching the seconds tick away while you're waiting for a player, who was at half-court when the shot was made, slowly run to the basket in order to in-bounds the ball.



[clockwise from top] **Don't fake the funk on a nasty dunk; Can anyone get that loose ball?; Blocking shots is pretty easy, but most of the time the ball goes right back to the shooter**

Like *NBA Live 97*, the computer can't auto-substitute. Why no game can do this is something of a mystery. It's not that complex; remove any player who gets two fouls in the first half, and if someone gets four in the second, yank them until late in the game. It seems the game only uses the Fatigue statistic for substituting, meaning you can foul-out a player early in the game, before they get tired.

Speaking of tired players, it looks liked every defender is exhausted, because they get back on defense so slowly that full-court pass will almost always setup an easy fast-break dunk. Another defensive lapse is the "steal" button, which makes it easy to get 10-20 steals a game without much of a risk of fouling. If you do knock the ball away, the computer players have a difficult time picking up a loose ball.

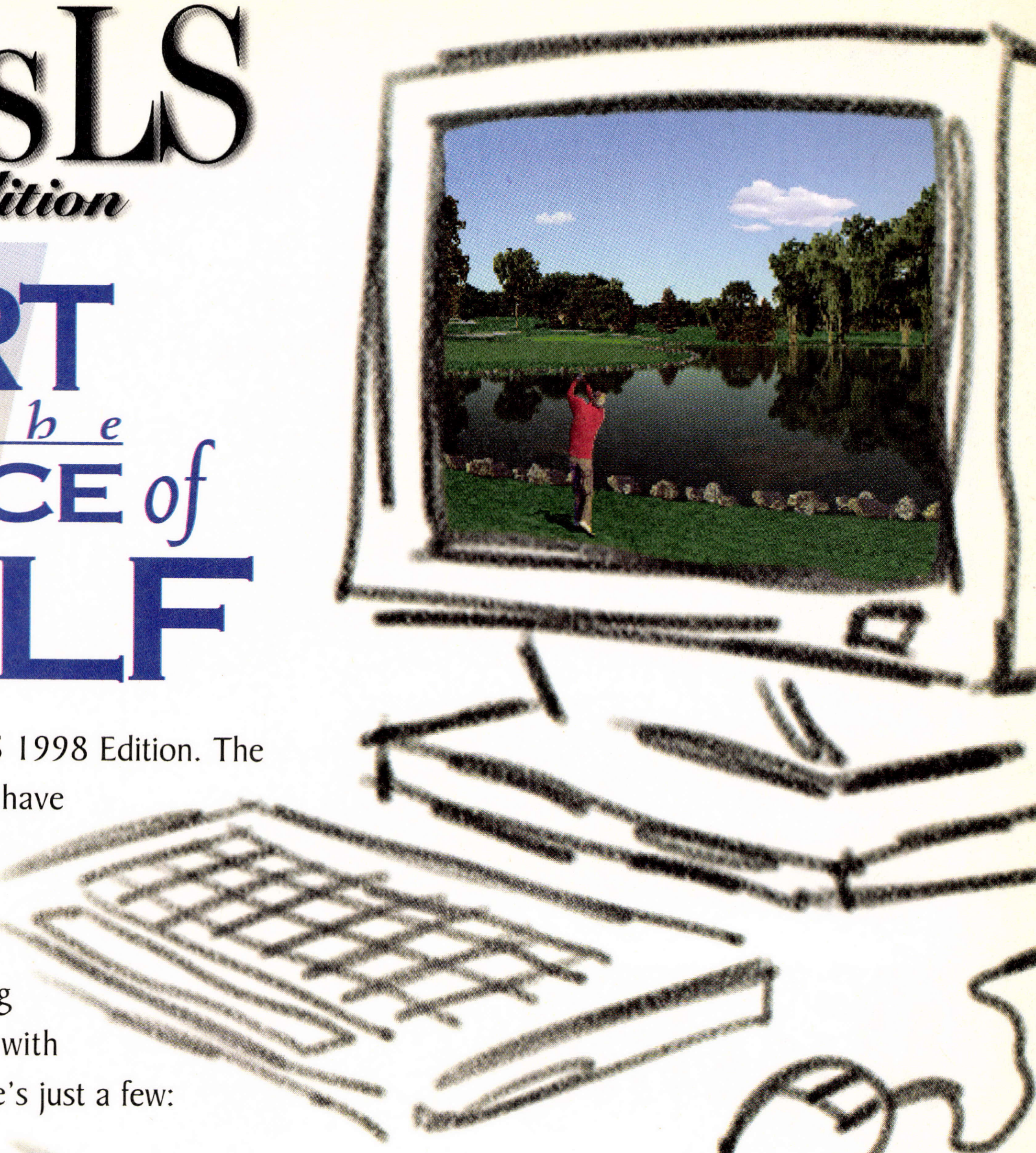
There are lots of potentially good features here, and it is MSA's first product, but we're not here to review potential, we're here to review this game. What's clear is that a little playtesting would have gone a long way. Or maybe *any* playtesting. Sorry *Final Four 97* – your scholarship has been revoked. You can try to come back next year as a walk-on, but you'll face an uphill battle for a spot on this team. *–Steve Bauman*

★⯨☆☆☆

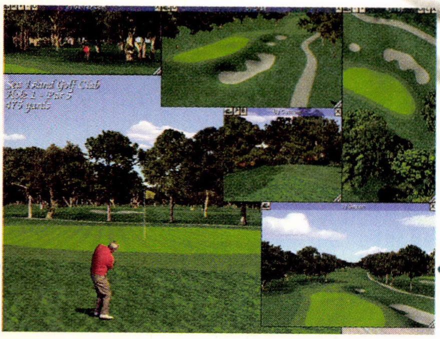
NCAA Final Four 97
Mindscape Sports Advantage • www.mindscapegames.com • Requirements: Windows 95, 75MHz Pentium, 8MB of RAM, 2X CD-ROM • Multiplayer: 2-4 at the same machine

Links LS
1998 Edition

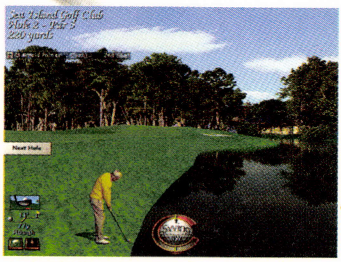
THE ART *and the* SCIENCE *of* GOLF



Introducing the Links LS 1998 Edition. The forces of art and science have combined to produce a golf experience like never before. This new version of the Codie Award winning golf simulation is packed with over 25 new features! Here's just a few:

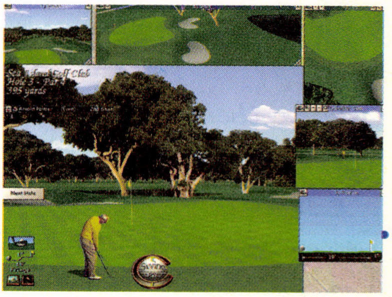


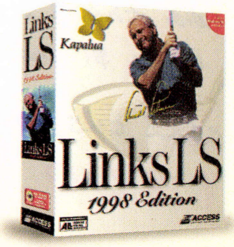
Brace yourself for lightening-fast redraws, main view in a window capability, and up to 8 additional "smart" camera views.



Our course designers have given even more attention to detail including new water reflections, improved textures and enhanced sky backgrounds.

Notice the new waving flags, birds, airplanes and other background animations with up to 8 of your friends over expanded internet play!





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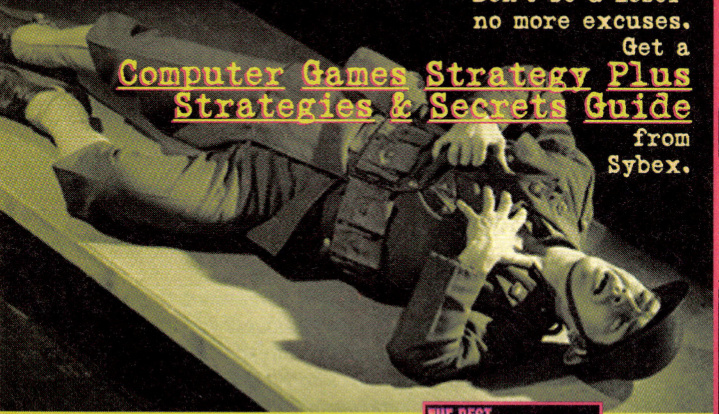

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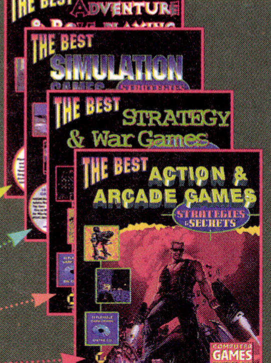
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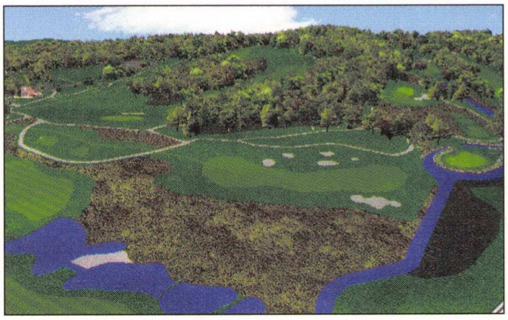
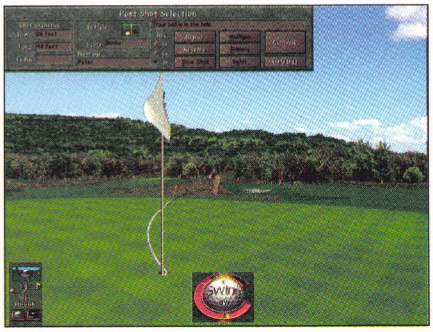
Valhalla Golf Club

Return to the Links for a little slice of heaven

[left to right] Nicklaus used water here to create the "island green" feel; This is what makes it all worthwhile





It seems like it's been a long time coming, but Access has finally produced an add-on disk for *Links LS*. The *Valhalla Golf Club* package includes two CDs – one contains the *Links LS* course, the other contains a course for "all versions of *Links* (both PC and Mac) except *Links LS*."

The Jack Nicklaus-designed Valhalla course is in Louisville, KY and is the site of the 1996 and 2000 PGA Championships. The course specializes in narrow fairways that get even narrower just where most of your drives are going to land. Many holes force you to lag up or smack the ball with everything you have, lest you catch some rough or worse, water. You may find yourself driving off the tee of a par four with your five wood more than once. All told, Valhalla is a solid course that is no doubt very tough in real life, but in *Links LS* is fairly forgiving if you play intelligently, rather than giving in to those testosterone induced urges.

As was true of the core game, in addition to the course you get a multimedia tour of the clubhouse, some FMV of highlights of the course, and other fluff that Access would do well to leave out. Instead, they should have given us additional player animations and perhaps sound files. A few recorded games played on the new course would also be nice. *Links 386* promised these sorts of add-ons, and they never appeared. Let's hope Access doesn't welch on the deal a second time.

Considering the fact that *Valhalla* is the first add-on *Links LS* course on the market, most golf *grognards* will probably snap it up, but it is unlikely to wind up on many "all-time favorite course" lists. *–Peter Smith*

★★★½☆

Valhalla Golf Club

Access Software • DOS, Windows, Macintosh • Requirements: Any version of Links or Microsoft Golf • Multiplayer: 2-8 players, LAN, modem, hotseat

---

Oakland Hills Country Club

Playing "The Monster" in Links LS

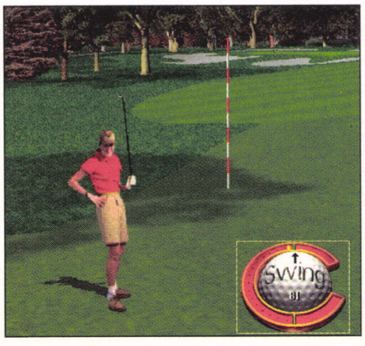
It would appear that Access' course machine is back in gear. After a long wait for the first *Links LS* add-on disk (*Valhalla*), *Oakland Hills* followed with not much delay.

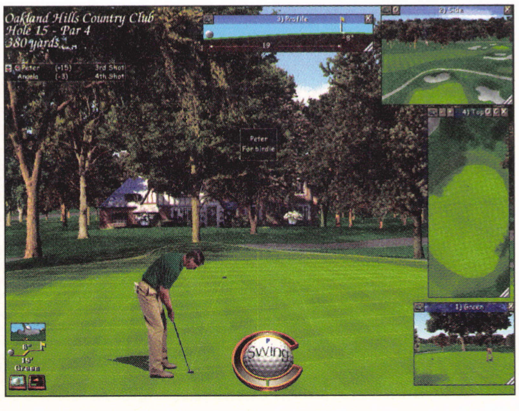
Oakland Hills was the site of the 1996 US Open, as well as several other championship tourneys over the years. An included mini-documentary of the course's history will fill you in on the details. Also included in the multimedia gravy is a travelogue about Detroit (the course is just outside of Detroit, MI) and the useless as always VR tour of the clubhouse.

This time out, Access has provided a handful of recorded games for the course, but still no additional animations or sounds. The course itself is more challenging than *Valhalla*, mostly due to the undulating terrain. A flat green is hard to find at *Oakland Hills*. There are also a few holes (the 11th and 16th come to mind) that have real character. Still, you can't help but wonder why Access doesn't do more. For instance, the included history tells of when "The Monster" (as the course is nicknamed) was "tamed" in 1961 by the removal of a few bunkers. Wouldn't it be great if Access provided two versions of the course – one as it stands today, and one with the older bunkers included – so golfers could experience the difference for ourselves?

Links LS has real competition these days: Accolade's *Jack Nicklaus IV* with it's wonderful course editor is already out there, and Looking Glass's *British Open Golf*, Sierra's *Front Page Sports: Golf*, and EA's *PGA Tour '98* all should be arriving soon. This does not seem the right time for Access to grow complacent. A few (useful) frills with each course disk would go a long way towards keeping consumers happy. *–Peter Smith*

[left to right] Yup, she's bad!; I always wanted a little cottage on a golf course...



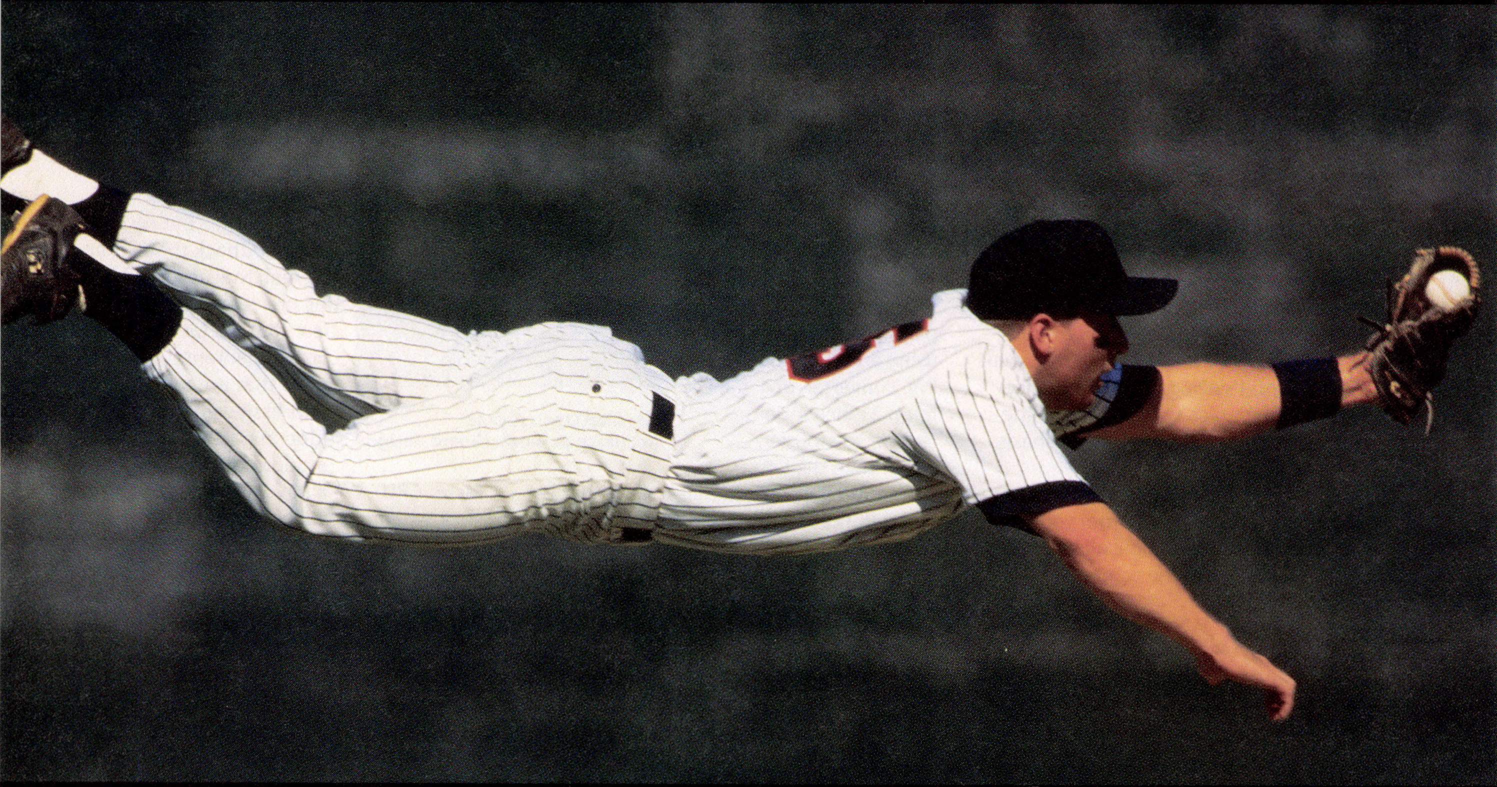


★★★½☆

Oakland Hills Country Club

Access Software • DOS, Windows, Macintosh • Requirements: Any version of Links or Microsoft Golf • Multiplayer: 2-8 players, LAN, modem, hotseat

ALL THE STRATEGY.



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A glimpse into the (near) future

Hardware dominates the 1997 Computer Game Developers Conference

Every year the *Computer Game Developers Conference* gives a glimpse at the toys that you'll be purchasing and developers will be supporting in the coming months. The last couple of years have seen the explosion of 3D graphics cards, and with that market stabilizing (with the 3Dfx chipset setting the performance standard), companies are focusing on the man-machine interface, with an emphasis on 3D gaming.

Many are still championing devices that produce realistic 3D images from your games, from the stereoscopic glasses from H3D Entertainment to the somewhat more bizarre hologram generating device that attaches to your monitor from Floating Images. Most of these things are interesting, but it's not clear how much they bring to gaming. It's the old chicken-egg thing – games won't be produced that take advantage of them until enough are out there, but gamers have been hesitant the purchase them because of a lack of support.

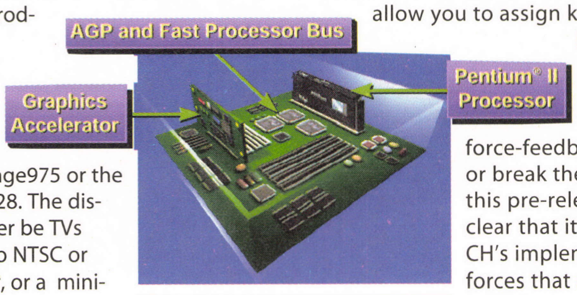
Cyberman 2

Other big displays at the show were reserved for controllers, with CH showing their force-feedback stick (*CGS+ 78*) and Thrustmaster their first digital controller, the Millennium 3D Interceptor (*CGS+ 76*). More interesting was Logitech's Cyberman 2, a 3D controller that works in every way that previous attempts – such as the Spaceball Avenger – do not. We'll have a full report on this controller down the road.

Intel goes to the arcades

Chipmaker giant Intel announced the specifications for their Open Arcade Architecture for a PC-based coin-op arcade machine. It's based around Intel's current motherboard designs and uses a Pentium II (formerly Klamath) processor, Windows (currently 95, NT in the future), DirectX, USB (universal serial bus) and the usual additional I/O devices. Games can be run from hard drives, CD-ROMs, or DVDs.

Graphically, the spec eventually calls for Intel's AGP (Accelerated Graphics Port) technology, requiring an ultra-fast 2D and 3D accelerator. If you're using a PCI-based 3D card, Intel recommends one based on the 3Dfx chipset. If you're using the AGP port, they recommend a card that meets, or exceeds, the performance of same. Announced products for AGP include the ATI 3D Rage Pro, Cirrus Laguna 3D, Trident 3DImage975 or the Nvidea RIVA128. The displays will either be TVs using a VGA to NTSC or PAL converter, or a minimum 21 inch monitor (expect the former, rather than the latter). The sound is via a SoundBlaster-compatible 16-bit PCI card and will be compatible with DirectSound. Depending on the application, an MPU-401 wavetable card may be used.



The Intel Open Arcade Architecture motherboard design

AGP is part of Intel's Dual Independent Bus (DIB) architecture that will be part of the Pentium II processor. The Pentium II, simplistically a Pentium Pro with MMX, is expected to reach speeds of up to 500MHz, so DIB will help eliminate the current bottlenecks in the PC, the processor-to-memory and processor-to-graphics speeds.

If you're wondering why this arcade board is relevant to PC gamers, consider that this specification is your future PC. If you're not already familiar with terms like USB and AGP, you will be, as they represent the future of controllers and graphics respectively.

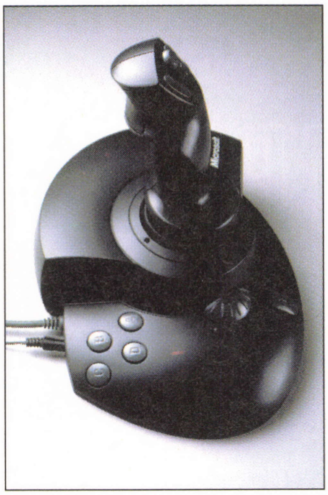
The force is with Microsoft

If you've been less than impressed with force-feedback, wait until you try Microsoft's upcoming all-digital stick. Dubbed the SideWinder Force Feedback Pro, it's already more impressive than CH Product's first-generation Force FX. While it'll still be bulkier than a regular joystick (gotta put the motors somewhere), it's smaller and lighter than CH's, and doesn't use a serial port.

Microsoft has redesigned the handle of the stick, placing buttons three and four in a better location than those on the current version of the SideWinder 3D Pro. The buttons on the base are in a better location as well, the throttle has been redesigned, and there's a new shift key that extends the functionality of each button, as a new version of the Game Device Profiler will allow you to assign keystrokes and button presses to any shifted button.

But it's the force-feedback that'll make or break the stick, and in this pre-release version, it's clear that it's far superior to CH's implementation, with forces that are more impressive and realistic (due in part to its more modern digital design and faster CPU). We'll have a full review of the stick when it's available this Fall.

Microsoft's support of force-feedback doesn't stop at their joystick. They've created an API and some slick software for editing forces. It uses a visual design that allows you to create and test forces with a few clicks of the mouse. Most of the terminology is shared with sound editing ' you can change the frequency, duration and amplitude of a force, and the direction. Turn a rifle into a rocket launcher with a couple of clicks, and try out the effect immediately.



SideWinder Force Feedback Pro

The API will ship with hundreds of canned effects, though no game designer would ever consider using anything supplied by a company (gotta spend months altering it, thereby causing delays in the ship date).

In summary, it looks an interesting hardware year for gamers. With Pentium II here and AGP on the way, your PC will soon be as fast as a Silicon Graphics Workstation. With Microsoft behind force-feedback, the cost of the controllers will no doubt drop (their stick will have a price of around $150), and the support will increase. Many games will require 3D cards by the end of the year, and it's clear that those based on the 3Dfx chipset will be the ones to own (the new Voodoo Rush chipset adds 2D graphics to the current 3D-only board). And we'll be here trying to decipher the acronyms and bring some order to the chaos. –*Steve Bauman*

Force FX

The new force feedback joystick from CH Products.

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Reviewing reviews

Your review of *Magic the Gathering: Battlemage* [*CGS+ 77*] couldn't be more accurate. What a mess. As a 35-year old who started playing the card game about three years ago, this game is an embarrassment. Uninstall, indeed… and, I mean quickly.

David C. Williams
Via Internet

Your review of *Interstate 76* totally sucked! [*CGS+ 78*] From reading your article a person would be led to believe that this game was a total waste of money. You failed to mention ANY good points of the game at all! You forgot to mention that the games story line is excellent when compared to most games coming out right now. The voice acting is excellent. Listen to *Resident Evil's* voice acting and you will beg to hear Taurus talk again. The replay value of the game is very good too because of the melee option. Lastly, and most importantly, the game is just plain fun and that's what people buy games for.

WarMaster7
Via Internet

First of I just want to say I completely disagree with you on your review *for Interstate 76*. But their is no point in me rambling on about it, so to the point of my letter. In your review you stated that, "On a 133MHz Pentium, the game can barely handle an ugly low-resolution…" Frankly, I don't know what you are talking about because I was running it on my Pentium 60 perfectly on low res, and was able to also run it in high… Also you stated that, "a 2000MHz MMX Pentium can't handle 640x480." That's funny because on my Pentium 200 it is probably one of the best running games I have seen with lag free gaming on the Internet!

Will Weismantel
Via Internet

Steve Bauman responds: To WarMaster7 – Had I praised the story and voice-acting while ignoring the gameplay flaws, I'd be crucified. I did have a number of positive things to say about the cut scenes and the general ambiance; however, I don't hear any convincing argument on your part why the review should have been more positive, since my criticisms were directed at the gameplay.

As for the performance issues, I was testing the game with all detail set to maximum, and with multiple vehicles on screen at one time. I consider anything less than 15 fps unacceptable. The 133MHz Pentium has a 128-bit Hercules card, and the 200MHz MMX Pentium was the Falcon Northwest Mach V reviewed in the same issue. The performance on both machines was inconsistent at best, and bad at worst.

Are you guys on drugs? 3 ½ stars for both *NHL 97* and *Red Alert*? Constant nit-picking about *Wing Commander IV*. You've trashed three of the best games on the market. I'm glad I don't read your regular publication, because I don't know what you are smoking when you review this stuff. Heck, you might even give all-FMV crap such as *Phantasmagoria* a 5 star rating.

Todd A. Hargosh
Via Internet

You obviously never read our Phantasmagoria review. I think the word "disaster" was used to describe it. Apparently, we weren't alone in our assessment of NHL 97… –ed

Thanks for the honest and accurate review of EA Sports' *NHL 97*. I have read dozens of reviews for this game, all of which think it's the greatest game ever. No one seems to want to say anything bad about EA. The AI is non-existent… Not all of us out here are morons, we want to read a review that tells the truth or else why read it at all. I don't know if EA pays these magazines or what, all I know is you guys were honest and I appreciate that.

Tom Linson
Via Internet

Industry-wide Diablo addiction

Your list of shrines for *Diablo* is perhaps the single most useful article since the Constitution of the United States. I keep a copy at my desk at all times.

And yes, I do realize how sad that is.

Kelt Reeves
Falcon Northwest Computers

So can we keep the computer now? –ed

Mac users speak out

As a Mac user, I wanted to write and thank you especially for the May issue that included the review of the *Musket Fire Series* of games. This is a set of historical war games (which are by far and away my favorite) which I would not have otherwise heard of without the coverage of your fine magazine. Many Thanks.

Scott Gallagher
Via Internet

I love your magazine but I'm starting to hate Microsoft for the ditching of my faithful Macintosh. I wish I could find some way to fight back at the company who stole the MacOS. It seems unfair that such a great system is losing its life to a copy. I don't want to seem like a total Mac advocate, but I love the games made for PCs but still don't like the computers. All of the hardware needs to be constantly upgraded to keep up with the programs. So far I haven't needed to touch my Mac, even for new programs.

I'm sorry if this offends anyone but I still feel that the Mac is the best all-around system available for any price. I wouldn't trade my 75MHz Performa 6220CD for a 200mhz MMX Pentium system. That's my feelings.

Matt High
Via Internet

Gamer grrls speak out

You might want to toss SegaSoft a clue [*Emperor of the Fading Suns ad, CGS+ 78, pg.89*]. There are big fat girls who subscribe to your magazine, there are big fat girls who kick ass in *Doom* and other games, and most importantly the BIG FAT GIRL in this household controls THE CREDIT CARDS.

I am now on my way to buy a Nintendo '64. I'll buy a Sega product the day they come and haul my BIG FAT DEAD BODY out of the house.

Maryanne K. Snyder
BIG FAT GIRL and PROUD OF IT

I realize that you do not create the ad campaigns of companies that advertise in your magazine. However, the [SegaSoft] ad is offensive to me. It says "Winston is such a girl." Using "girl" as an insult is teaching your readers (mostly young men and boys, I suspect) that girls and women are inferior to men and boys. Maybe they think girls/women cannot or should not play their games? It seems like they are limiting their market, doesn't it?

To call another boy a "girl," or to say "you fight like a girl" is something that boys will do which gives evidence to the fact that they observe differences between males and females. But the media should not reinforce the idea that girls are inferior to boys.

Being no feminist, I am not easily offended by the media, but I am a thirty-something woman who likes to game. I find it relaxing and fun. Please don't tell me you think I cannot or should not play.

Carol Engebretson
Via Internet

All valid points. Alienating 50% of your potential audience seems to be rather silly, especially when the word "wimp" would have had the same effect. For the record, our readers are not "mostly young men and boys," rather they tend to be thirty-something males. –ed

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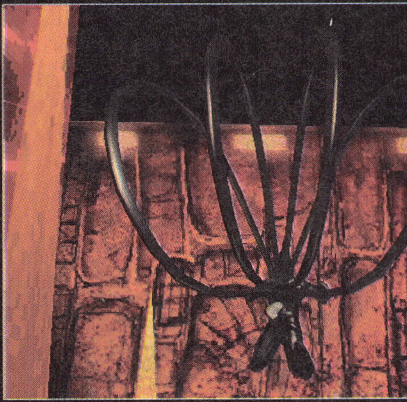

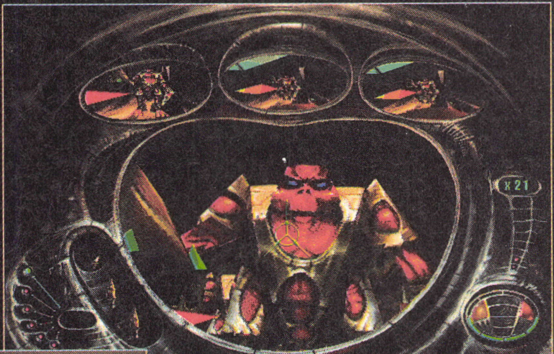

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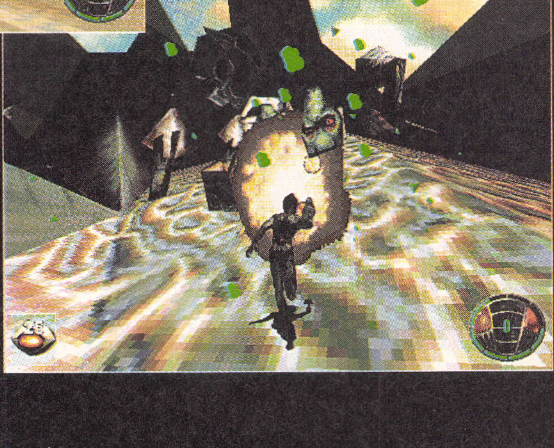

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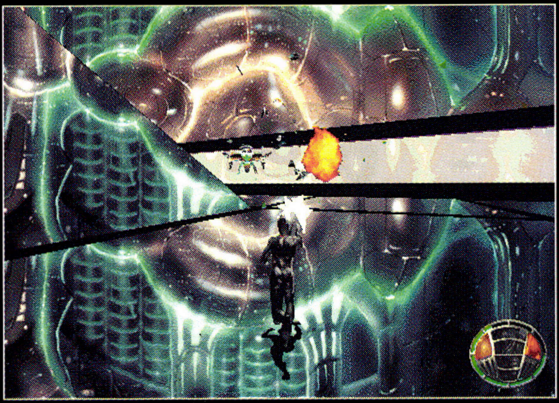

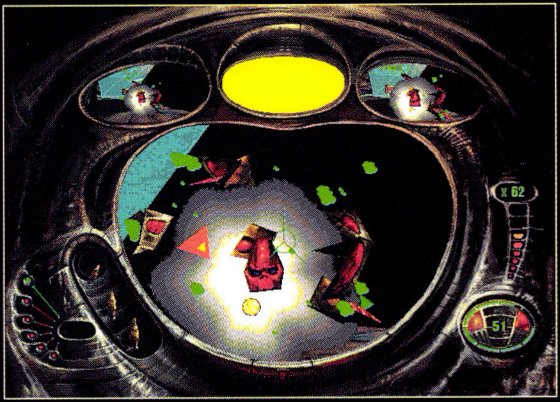

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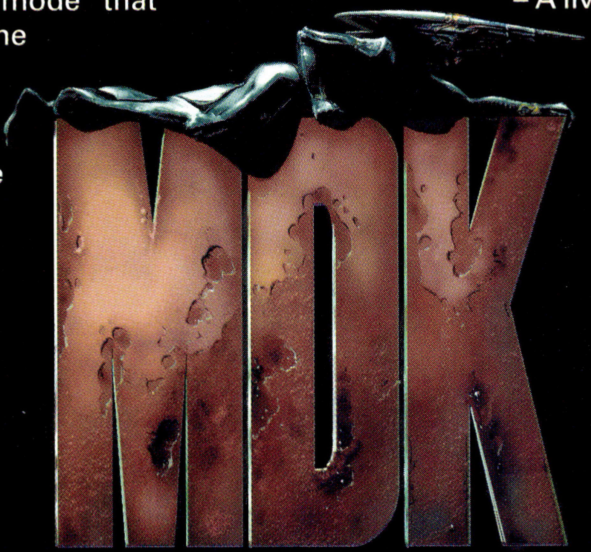
  - – A helmet-mounted sniper rifle that targets enemies from over two miles away.
  - – A living polymer suit that protects from piercing projectiles.
  - – A high-tech reusable parachute.
  - – Bombs... decoys... homing sniper grenades... and many more.
- Two styles of adrenaline-pumping game dynamics featuring first and third person point of view.



IT THINKS. THEREFORE IT KILLS.

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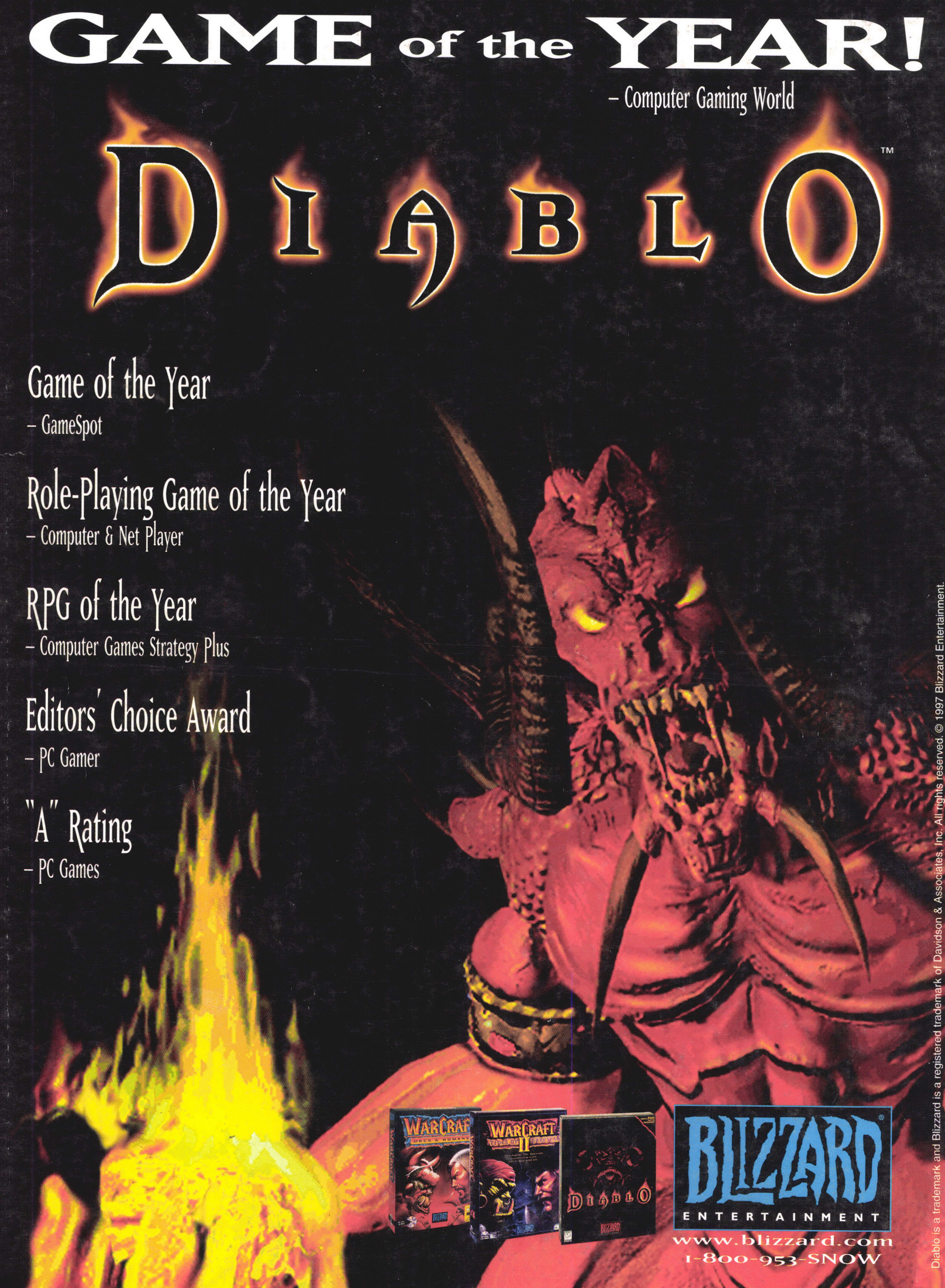

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– PC Gamer

"A" Rating
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